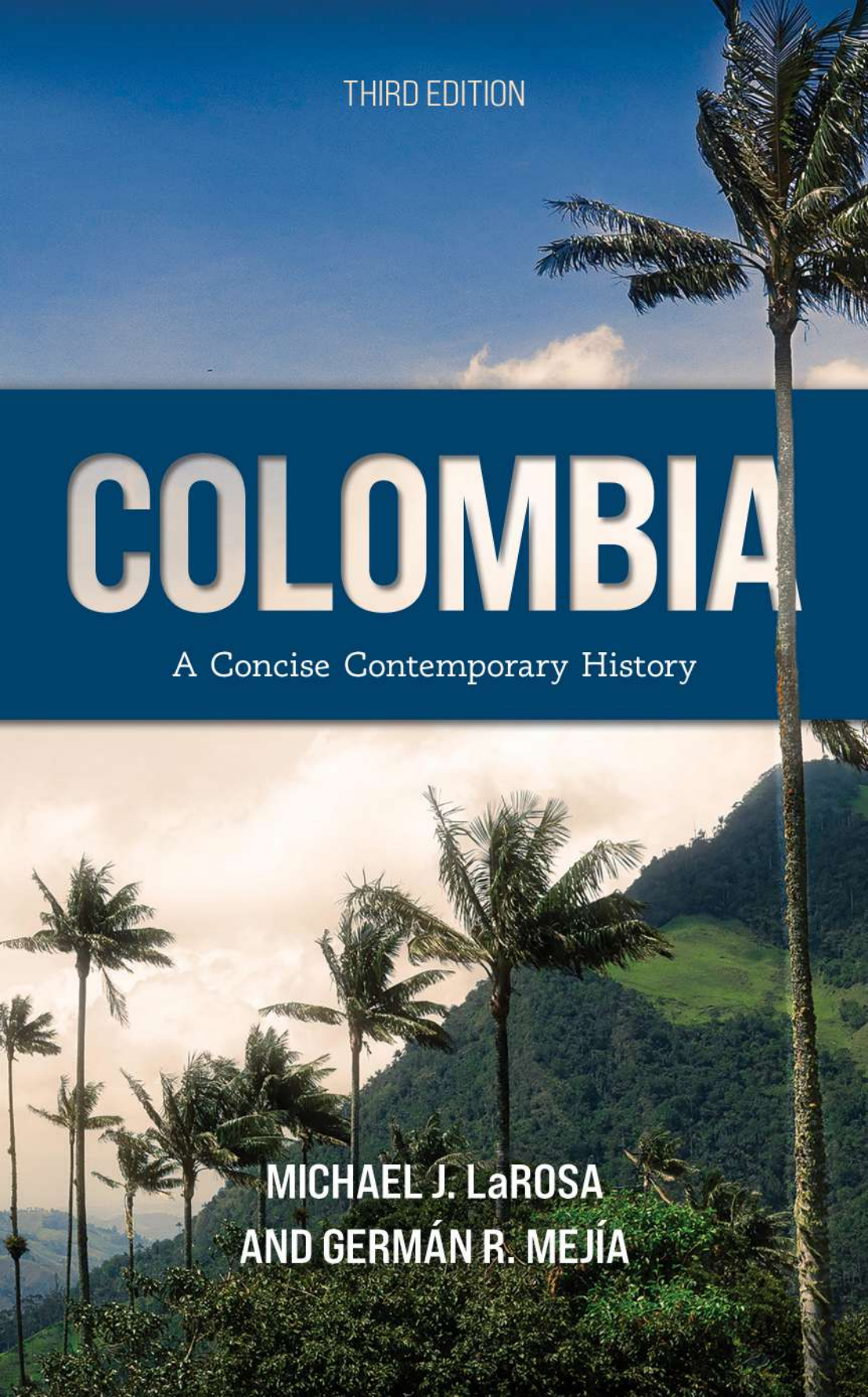

THIRD EDITION
COLOMBIA
A Concise Contemporary History
MICHAEL J. LaROSA
AND GERMÁN R. MEJÍA

Colombia

Colombia

A Concise Contemporary History

Third Edition

Michael J. LaRosa and
Germán R. Mejía

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

Published by Rowman & Littlefield
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE

Copyright © 2023 by The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: LaRosa, Michael (Michael J.), author. | Mejía, Germán R., 1954- author.
Title: Colombia : a concise contemporary history / Michael J. LaRosa and Germán R. Mejía.
Description: Third edition. | Lanham : Rowman & Littlefield, [2023] | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2023022067 (print) | LCCN 2023022068 (ebook) | ISBN 9781538177105 (cloth) | ISBN 9781538177112 (paperback) | ISBN 9781538177129 (epub)
Classification: LCC F2273 .L37 2023 (print) | LCC F2273 (ebook) | DDC 986.1—dc23/eng/20230523
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023022067
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2023022068

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

To our mentors and friends,
Steve and Pilar Stein of Coral Gables, Florida,
and to the memory of our parents,
Barbara M. LaRosa, Yolanda Pavony de Mejía, Robert P. LaRosa,
and Alfonso Mejía Restrepo

Contents

Acknowledgments		xi
Foreword by Pamela S. Murray		xiii
Introduction		1
1	Origins	9
	Precedents	10
	The Crisis of Empire	14
	1810: The Development of the Juntas	17
	The First Republic (1811–1816)	23
	The Final Battle against Absolutism	26
	Colombia: The Second Republic (1819–1830)	28
	The End of an Era of Change	31
2	The Colombian Nations	33
	Colombian Indigenous Population	34
	The Afro-Colombian Population	38
	Other Colombians	40
	Demography and Its Numbers	42
	Colonizers and Settlers: The Nineteenth Century	44
	An Urban Country: The Twentieth Century	49
3	The Dynamics of a Political Community	53
	Citizenship	55
	Rights	57
	The Democratic Model and Politics	59
	Government	63
	The Formation of Law	67

4 The Cadence of Unity 71
The Parties and the Nation 72
Communion in Beliefs 77
A Common Memory 81
A Single Institutionalism 84

5 Conflict 89
The Spanish Evacuation 91
Political Conflict in the Nineteenth Century 91
Panama Separates 95
Conflict in the Twentieth Century 96
La Violencia 100
Insurgency Intervention 102
Narco-Violence 104
Plan Colombia, 2000 106

6 Colombians Search for Peace 111
The Nature of the Colombian Armed Conflict 112
The Stages of the War 113
The Peace Processes in Historic Perspective 118
The Future 123

7 Economic Unity 127
Colonial Colombia Compared 128
Monopoly and Economy, 1750–1850 130
Coffee 133
The Percolating Twenties 136
Oil and Industrialization 137
The National Front 139
Modern Times 140

Photo Essay 145

8 A Common Space 169
From Horse Path to Highway 171
Steamships and Railways 174
Aerial Cables and Airplanes 178
Mail and Communications Systems 179
Print Media 182

9 Cultural Dynamism 185
Sculpture and Painting 186
Literature 190
Theater 196

Architecture 198
Music 199

10 Daily Life 203
Popular Religious Celebrations 204
Sports 207
Beauty Pageants 210
Retaking the Colombian Urban Centers 211
Radio, TV, and Soap Operas 215
Gastronomy, Colombian Style 217
University Life in Colombia 218

11 Colombia and the World 221
The Early Days 222
The Canal Project 224
1928 226
World War II and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán 228
Korea and the Alliance for Progress 231
Pope Paul VI and the Close of the 1960s 233
Contadora, Central America, and Colombia's Neighbors 235
Uribe and Bush: Brothers in Arms 238
Enter Santos 239
Duque as President 241

12 Colombians Abroad 243
Preliminary Observations on Colombian Emigration 243
Why Colombians Leave: A Historic Overview 245
Bienvenidos to Queens 246
The 1980 Refugee Act 248
The Special Case of Colombians in Venezuela 249
Remesas—Sending Money Home 251
Colombians Abroad: Some Names 252
Some Sustained (and Unfortunate) Stereotypes 254
Peace Process and the Great Reverse Migration? 255

13 2016 and Beyond: *¡Basta Ya!* 259
The Elusive Peace 260
The Pandemic 263
Economic Data 264
Migratory Processes 265
Trouble on the Streets of Colombia 268
Tourism: The Contemporary Trend 271

Conclusion 275
Colombian Chronology, 1810–2022 279
Selected Bibliography 319
Index 325
About the Authors 343

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the many people who have assisted us with the research and writing of this book. First, Susan McEachern at Rowman & Littlefield has offered professional, thoughtful insight from the earliest days of this project's development, and we thank her for her unwavering support. Grace Baumgartner, at Rowman, has been a helpful editor and advisor. June Erlick at Harvard University and Lance Ingwersen, a doctoral student in history at Vanderbilt University, each reviewed early drafts of the prospectus; Mr. Ingwersen also assisted with editing chapters of the manuscript, as did journalist Casey M. Conley from Portland, Maine.

Professor Pamela Murray graciously offered to write a foreword to this work, for which we are extremely grateful. She also provided editorial advice. Paul J. Angelo carefully and patiently edited the entire manuscript.

Writer and editor Juan Pablo Lombana assisted with research, as did historian Lina Del Castillo. Ms. Del Castillo translated segments of the book from Spanish to English. Curator Marina Pacini and historian Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas, in Memphis, facilitated research, as did Martha Senn from Medellín.

At Rhodes College, we benefited from the support of students Andrew Howie, who helped with fact-checking and editing, and Cameron Goodman, who provided research and editing assistance; he also helped with the selection of photographs and compiled sections of the bibliography.

Dean Michael R. Drompp provided startup funds from Rhodes College, and Professor Ann Viano supported our project with additional research funding from the college. Nannette Gills assisted with many administrative details.

In Medellín, Luis Ospina facilitated research at the Biblioteca Pública Piloto, and the director of that library, Gloria Inés Palomino Londoño, warmly welcomed us, as did Sergio Carvajal of the same institution.

Daniela López and Rubén Carvajal, history students in Bogotá, provided the copious research that went into our chronology. Pablo Silva, an architecture student at the National University in Bogotá, drew our maps, based on designs developed by Germán R. Mejía. In Memphis, graphic designers Lynn Conlee and Robert Shatzer edited and assisted with final design of the maps, and Joseph Morris, with little more than an iPhone 4 in hand, helped with statistical interpretation. Jeffrey A. Knowles compiled our index. Matt LaFevor helped review page proofs. For the revised paperback edition, we'd like to acknowledge the editorial assistance of Kevin Carlucci, John A. Harrison, and Tanner Neidhardt. Photographer David C. LaFevor improved the quality of our photographs, and Christian Warren updated the index.

For the second edition of this book, we counted on the help of Rhodes College student Tucker Nichols, who assisted with research. Timothy Garton, a graduate student at NYU, proofread, edited, and compiled the index, and Manuel Sarmiento (the actor) from Bogotá provided useful insights. Professors Yolanda Puyana Villamizar and Diana Bonnett Vélez supported this project in Bogotá, as did the educator Agustín Lombana. Danny Nieto A., in Bogotá, clarified technical matters. Professor Jeff Jackson, in Memphis, provided additional financial support at the production stage. Rebeccah Shumaker and Alden Perkins (in Boulder) have been patient and professional editors. We're extremely grateful for the patience, perseverance, and in many cases, warm friendship of the people who assisted us with this project.

For the third edition, we had funding support from associate provost Timothy Huebner at Rhodes College in Memphis. Tait Keller, Juanita Bernál Benavides, Bonnie Burgette, Nathan Watson, and Colin McCown offered invaluable support in Memphis. Alan Belitsky helped with research and editing from Tucson, Arizona. David LaFevor, from Fort Worth, supplied visual material. Joseph Morris assisted with research from Lafayette, Louisiana, as did Luis A. Ospina from Medellín. In Washington, DC, we counted on the support of Paul J. Angelo and Kevin Carlucci. Marina Pacini and Lake Newton, in Memphis, offered advice on the book's visuals. Gwen Williams, a student at Rhodes College, helped with editing and research. John Alexander Pedreros Sarmiento helped compile our bibliography and updated the "Chronology" in Bogotá. Pamela Murray offered editorial suggestions and graciously updated the book's Foreword. Students in M. LaRosa's "History of Colombia" course (spring 2022) offered valuable insights on the second edition of this book. Michael Tan and Katelyn Turner, at Rowman & Littlefield, helped move this project forward, and we want to thank the professional counsel of the anonymous reviewers who supported this project.

Foreword

Like the two authors of this book, my connection to Colombia is personal as well as professional. It started in the mid- to late-1960s, with childhood visits to my mother's native Medellín. Compared with places like Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Havana, Mexico City, or even Colombia's own capital of Bogotá, Medellín back then was a rather obscure Latin American city. Few here in the United States had heard of it. Although humming with modern entrepreneurial energy, it still had a sedate, small-town feel—not yet that of today's hurried, more sophisticated metropolis with its sleek light rail and high-rises commanding the slopes of the Aburra Valley. It was a city of neighborhoods, churchgoing and family oriented; a place where everyone seemed to know everyone; and where guests, including the relatively rare foreigner, could expect a place of honor along with invitations to long visits (their eager-to-please hosts feeling offended if they left too soon). Children were at the center of things, the youngest and whiniest invariably spoiled and catered to. My sisters and I, "exotic" gringas all three, always found a warm reception, our broken Spanish tolerated with good humor. It was through this family that I first came to know Colombia and a people that were kindly, confident, and can-do, possessed of a certain flair. Life, while serious, was to be enjoyed, lived with zest. I became an admirer. Authors Michael LaRosa and Germán Mejía no doubt would find this entirely reasonable.

Which brings me to the point of this foreword. LaRosa and Mejía have performed a rare service for the broad U.S. reading public: that of offering a comprehensive, up-to-date, deeply informed, and highly readable primer on Colombia—a country that, despite its size, wealth, and geopolitical importance, remains one of the least-known and most-misunderstood countries in Latin America. Although both authors are professional historians, their book is no traditional academic history. It is unabashedly "presentist," as

historians sometimes, rather sniffily, say. Its thirteen chapters aim less to dissect the mysteries of the past, an exercise dear to scholars, than to explain, as concisely as possible, how Colombia became what it is today. Overall, they stress Colombia's emergence as a viable, indeed successful, modern nation.

This claim may surprise some readers. Most contemporary observers have portrayed Colombia as something of a failure or, at least, a huge disappointment—a country racked by chronic sociopolitical violence rooted in, among other things, inherited partisan hatreds; severe social inequuality; a weak, corrupt state; and, not least, the influence of a vast, insidious, and illegal drug industry. The grim accounting of this violence and its diverse manifestations—studies of the notorious mid-twentieth-century partisan conflict–cum–national killing spree known as La Violencia, for example—has dominated serious writing on the country. Sensationalist portrayals in the mass media, meanwhile, have distorted public perceptions and understanding of it. As exemplified by the popular 1980s television series *Miami Vice* and the more recent (2015–2016) Netflix series *Narcos*, these have ensured that the country's image remains wedded to drugs and violence in the minds of most Americans.

LaRosa and Mejía don't deny the germ of truth behind this image. They acknowledge the harsh realities that have been documented by scholars and researchers both in and outside the country. Yet they also ask a question seldom asked by Colombia observers: What factors have allowed Colombia, as a nation, to endure and, despite its endemic problems, to thrive? Instead of inquiring into a presumed state of illness or dysfunction, the authors inquire into the basis of relative good health: What is working, and what has worked in this bustling country of some fifty million? Their book, thus, highlights those aspects of Colombian history and culture that have contributed most visibly to national unity as well as sustained peace and prosperity.

The book's fourth chapter, for example, explains how institutions like the Catholic Church, the army, and a historic, multiclass, two-party political system (along with factors like the Spanish language and a public education system that taught national history and geography) each laid a foundation for unity by building bonds among Colombians of different races, classes, and regions. Its brief summary of the role of the two-party system, in particular, reflects Colombian historians' own recent reassessment of their country's nineteenth-century experience. Myriad bloody civil wars, death, and destruction weren't the only (or most important) result of the rise of the Liberal and Conservative Parties. Another was individuals' enhanced sense of belonging to a larger Colombian nation. This sense of belonging or identity came through affiliation with one or another party. In claiming the loyalty of people from across a vast territory while, with each election, mobilizing them

around a great cause, idea, or moral principle, the parties connected isolated communities, lifting Colombians above the limited horizons of the local and familial. Partisan affiliation also gave ordinary people a certain protection from enemies as well as access to state services such as roads, schools, and justice, and to jobs, scholarships, and career opportunities. It helped build nationhood, however bifurcated.

Other chapters highlight additional factors that have contributed to the making of a modern, viable, and increasingly inclusive Colombia. One factor is a long tradition of bipartisan cooperation, or *convivencia*, that has served historically to curb the excesses of partisan rivalry and, in the twentieth century, limit damage caused by bloody conflicts like La Violencia. An important contemporary version of this tradition appeared in 1991, when Colombians from various parties, groups, and factions met to draft a new constitution—one that gives voice to previously marginalized constituencies and, for the first time, recognizes the sociocultural rights of long-persecuted ethnic minorities, the country's indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations in particular. Equally important has been the historic 2016 peace agreement between President Santos's administration and the FARC guerilla leaders. As detailed by the authors in chapter 6, this agreement embodies a vital recent example of Colombian desires to transcend old political hatreds and above all, address conditions that have fueled them, along with endemic war and violence.

Readers less interested in the details of Colombian history and institutional development will enjoy chapter 9, on Colombian achievements in literature and the arts, the latter building on the legacy of indigenous (especially Muisca) forebears. This chapter reveals that while the country has launched writers and artists of world renown, such as Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez and the distinguished painter and sculptor Fernando Botero, it also brims with lesser-known talent. Chapter 10, meanwhile, highlights more everyday forms of creativity through its survey of Colombian daily life and popular culture, such as beauty pageants, soap operas, foodways, and the like. It includes a fascinating account of how, in the 1990s, leaders and urban planners in Medellín and Bogotá began to "take back" their cities through strategic investments in public transportation, parks, and other infrastructure that enhanced the cities' livability. Such improvements—such as the expansive modern light rail system of Medellín and the Transmilenio bus system in Bogotá—helped boost civic pride and community spirit; despite crime and other problems, such as the refugees ("desplazados") pouring in from a violence-stricken countryside, they ultimately promoted a greater sense of well-being and security among urban residents. Although Colombia overall continues to search for a peace that includes a modicum of justice for

the many victims of the last forty or so years of internal war and violence, as the authors report in their new final chapter, it also has overcome many obstacles and belongs fully to the modern world. Hopes are high that recently elected President Gustavo Petro will be a further catalyst for progress in that direction.

Pamela S. Murray
University of Alabama at Birmingham
Birmingham, Alabama
March 8, 2023

Introduction

We are grateful for the opportunity to publish this third edition of *Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History* eleven years after the release of the first edition. There have been some significant changes in the nation since 2012. The first, most obvious reform involves the peace process, which was still in the planning stages when this book was originally published in April 2012. Since that time, and after a nearly four-year, arduous process of negotiation in Havana, the Colombian government, under the leadership of President Juan Manuel Santos, signed an agreement with the FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Popular Army), but that agreement was narrowly rejected by the electorate in an October 2, 2016, plebiscite. A new, revised agreement emerged on November 12, signed at a ceremony in the historic "Teatro Colón" in the capital city and passed through the Colombian Senate and House of Representatives on November 29 and 30, respectively. Though the conflict with the FARC-EP is officially "settled," creating *actual* peace in a nation afflicted by half a century of war has promised to be an arduous challenge for this, and the next generation of Colombians.

Colombia's Nobel laureate and literary star, Gabriel García Márquez, died in April 2014, and the second Nobel Prize for a Colombian was awarded to President Juan Manuel Santos in October 2016 for his dedication to—some say fixation on—the peace process. Colombia's first Catholic saint, "Madre Laura" (Laura Montoya), was canonized in Rome in May 2013.

News of Nobel Prizes, peace processes, and canonizations is certainly better than the dreary decades of the past, when most of the news from Colombia involved war between the FARC-EP + ELN and the government, illegal drug trafficking, and general insecurity in the cities and countryside. We're not suggesting that Colombia has magically morphed into Sweden, but there is a

palpable difference, as we update this book for the second time, in 2023, on the streets and in the general perception that the nation has, in fact, turned a corner. One indicator of this: tourism. Foreign tourism to Colombia has grown over the past ten years: In 2010, 1,404,641 tourists visited Colombia; that number grew to nearly two million by 2014, and it increased another 10 percent by the end of 2015. It is estimated that some 4.5 million tourists visited Colombia in 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic dealt a crushing blow to the world economy.

Troubles remain. First, a leadership deficit was provided by the administration of president Iván Duque (2018–2022) during a time of existential crisis in Colombia, and the world: the time of COVID-19. Duque's first error was to essentially "ignore" the peace accords of 2016, which allowed bad actors and those loosely committed to the peace process to exert influence. In November 2019, teenager Dilan Cruz died violently on the streets of Bogotá while protesting for education reforms and broader access to higher education. His death triggered street protests in the major cities—as young people came to view their government as not only indifferent, but also deadly.

COVID-19 devastated Colombia, a nation with a large service and commercial sector: the Colombian economy shrank by 6.8 percent in 2020, then, on April 15, 2021, President Duque introduced a wide-ranging, ill-conceived tax-hike bill that enraged the nation and sent millions to protest in the streets of the nation. The protests were not always peaceful and were especially harsh in the third-most-populous city, Cali. Duque's presidency essentially collapsed at this moment, and the path was set for new leadership. On August 7, 2022, Gustavo Petro, the former mayor of Bogotá and insurgent with the M-19 guerrilla organization before that group negotiated for peace in 1989, was inaugurated president of the Republic. One of his first acts as president: announcing that his government would seek "Total Peace" ["Paz Total"] for the nation. Thus, he reinitiated peace negotiations with the ELN insurgency group that currently counts 2,000 to 2,500 armed actors.

For the United States, Colombia continues to be somewhat of an anachronism and an enigma. The country remains on the U.S. Department of State's "warning list," yet Colombia receives more military and defense funding from the United States than any other Latin American country. As of this writing in early 2023, Colombia has received about eleven billion dollars in mostly military funds since the U.S. Congress approved the "Plan Colombia" of 2000.

Changes in technology have forced the global media to significantly shift the way they cover Colombia. Stories focusing on tourism, restaurants, Colombian tennis stars, and positive reviews of literary works and music performances by Colombians suggest that the U.S. media's perception of the

Andean nation is evolving away from the myopic, one-dimensional view that marked earlier portrayals of the country. Terrorism, kidnapping, and violence have faded into the media background while other facets of Colombia's rich, complex culture and history flourish in the consciousness of readers of the international press.

Our book offers a fresh interpretation of Colombian history based on the multitude of facts, historic events, and circumstances that have come together to form that history. We focus on the modern period, that is, from around 1800 to the present. Colonialists will, no doubt, bemoan our modernist sensibilities, but our narrative does not entirely neglect the significant three-hundred-year period of Spanish colonialism.

Peruvian historian Alberto Flores Galindo reminds us in one of his most prescient books, *In Search of an Inca*, how "History should liberate us from the past, not seal us off . . . within *longue durée* prisons of ideas."[1] Our goal in writing this new history of Colombia follows Galindo's logic as applied to Colombia's recent history. We have been influenced by the excellent historiography on Colombia written by scholars both in and outside the country. But in reviewing recent books, we noticed that a concise, contemporary interpretation of the Colombian past has not yet been published in English. The central idea in developing this project is to offer a new history based on the existent scholarship, but departing from that body of work in significant ways. New works of history should be bold, energetic, and innovative—connected to the past, but not trapped by it. "If people are controlled by ghosts," writes Galindo, "it is impossible to confront the future."[2] Confronting the future would seem to invoke the methodologies of astrologers; yet the two authors of this book are both academically trained historians who understand how one's reading of the present shapes our interpretation of the past.

One of the major contributions of our 223-year (c. 1800–2023) history of Colombia is that it foregrounds themes rather than chronology. The colonial patterns, logic, institutions, economy, government, and culture form the foundation of our text—a foundation that is always present, but not necessarily at the forefront of our presentation.

This book builds on the work of the late David Bushnell, who in 1993 published his groundbreaking *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*. His work, the first comprehensive treatment of Colombian history published by a U.S. historian in English, is considered the standard reference text for students, scholars, and others, both in North and South America. Bushnell's clearly written text emphasizes nineteenth-century politics and society as "foundational" in explaining patterns of twentieth-century Colombia. In 2001, Marco Palacios, a Colombian historian working now in Mexico, and the late American historian Frank Safford published *Colombia:*

Fragmented Land, Divided Society. Their book emphasizes economic and social trends and developments and, thus, nicely complements Bushnell's more political focus. In Spanish, four books have been released in the past few years that deal with Colombian history. One covers the period from the pre-Columbian period to the present, another one only deals with the twentieth century (up to 2021), and the other two focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in addition to the initial years of the present century. These books are authored by César Torres del Río, *Colombia Siglo XX desde la Guerra de los Mil Días hasta la elección de Álvaro Uribe*, first published in 2010 (revised, 2015); Ricardo Arias published *Historia de Colombia Contemporánea (1920–2010)* in 2011; Jorge Orlando Melo released, in 2017, *Historia Mínima de Colombia*; and Hernando Gómez Buendía published *Entre la Independencia y la Pandemia: Colombia 1810–2020* (2021).

Recently, authors from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds have published books about Colombia in English. Many of these publications focus on topics taken from media headlines during the days when those headlines focused mostly on the gloomy segment of the Colombian narrative. While some of the books are thoughtful, serious works, overall their titles suggest the limited scope of much writing, scholarship, and publication on Colombia in the past twenty years. For example, in 2003, human rights activist Robin Kirk published a book titled *More Terrible Than Death: Violence, Drugs and America's War in Colombia*, which recounted the recent human rights tragedy in Colombia, ascribing drugs and U.S. military action as leading causes of contemporary mayhem. Colombian American journalist and writer Silvana Paternostro published *My Colombian War* in 2007, and in 2009, Gary Leech published *Beyond Bogotá: Diary of a Drug War Journalist in Colombia*. Canadian social scientist Jasmin Hristov's *Blood and Capital: The Paramilitarization of Colombia* (2009) is passionate but largely impressionistic. Mark Boden's *Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw*, though published in 2002, remains indefinitely—it seems—a best seller on Amazon. Collectively, these works paint an uneven, sensationalist picture of Colombian history.

An astounding book, published in 2020, is by veteran anthropologist Wade Davis. *Magdalena River of Dreams: A Story of Colombia* is a sensitive, beautifully written, and deeply felt book that traces Colombian history and culture "down" the Magdalena River, south to north. Other excellent, carefully researched, and highly readable books have been published since we released the second edition of this book. These include *Cowards Don't Make History* by Joanne Rappaport (2020), which focuses on the sociologist Orlando Fals Borda and participatory action research in Colombia. Robert Karl published an excellent monograph, *Forgotten Peace*, in 2017, a study comparing the

political/intellectual class's vision/version of peace and violence versus the interpretation of the people.

Unlike some of the works mentioned above, we have not written our book from the perspective of Colombia as a country on the brink of failure. Likewise, we avoid drawing explicit comparisons to a completely distinct North Atlantic political and socioeconomic model of development. Bushnell, Palacios, and Safford study Colombia by comparing it to North Atlantic nations: naturally, "fragmentation and divided" are conclusions they draw in communicating a state of near-perpetual flux. In the chapters that follow, we depart from the relied-upon schema that scholars have employed repeatedly to write the history of Colombia. In other words, we do not use the standard comparisons, nor do we rely upon a somewhat-artificial division between centuries to mark significant periods in Colombian history.

Generally, most historical texts written about Colombia focus on a strife-filled nineteenth century, with countless civil wars, conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the state, regional rivalry and a period of détente toward the late 1880s, with a new constitution of 1886 (that endured for one hundred and five years), and the signing of a treaty with the Holy See, the Concordat of 1887. Economic development during the 1880s is based on the exportation of coffee, while a major civil war at the end of the nineteenth century ushers in the twentieth century—the so-called War of a Thousand Days. Historians use this war and the subsequent separation of Panama that was orchestrated with active encouragement by the United States to distinguish between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. The major themes of the twentieth century are political development, the resurgence of liberal rule (after 1930), economic development, urbanization and modernization, and destructive political and social violence that dissipates for a twenty-five-year period (from about 1903 to the late 1920s) but never fully abates.

Our book adopts a new, thematic organization through which we have been careful not to foreground political and social violence, economic crises, and fragmentation. Rather than focus on this catastrophic vision of Colombian history, based on the constructs of underdevelopment, or definitions of progress or dependency that originate in more modern, wealthy, and progressive North Atlantic societies, we have written about a Colombia that endures. We pose a few central questions throughout the text, linking those questions to our thematic structure: despite all the known problems—misrule, mayhem, and crises—how is it that the nation stays together? What are the factors that have helped unify Colombia throughout the decades? What are the cultural, economic, and social programs that have held Colombia together as a viable political and economic entity? What has been built in Colombia? What has endured? What has been rebuilt, and how? These are important questions that

have been largely overlooked by authors who embrace the idea of Colombia as a chaotic failure. While we have no intention of whitewashing Colombia's contentious contemporary history, we stress those enduring institutions, cultural mechanisms, and economic patterns that have sustained the nation over the decades. The reader will notice some intentional repetition from chapter to chapter, as key events in Colombia's history are analyzed from distinct perspectives. For example, the "taking of Panama" in 1903, an event that significantly shaped Colombia's twentieth century, is analyzed in chapter 5, on conflict, and in chapter 11, which focuses on contemporary Colombian international relations.

Colombia's history can and will be compared to the histories of its neighbors and to the projects and priorities of the more-advanced industrial nations of the North Atlantic. But Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez warned against hasty comparisons in his 1982 Nobel lecture when he said, "The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary."[3] We cannot make a nation's history less solitary, but we can try to present history from a fresh perspective—thus bringing dynamism to a national narrative based largely on assumptions, established patterns, and traditions. The study of history is liberating, and new interpretations offer us the opportunity to reconsider our reading, our understanding, our sense of a nation's history.

NOTES

1. Alberto Flores Galindo, *In Search of an Inca*: *Identity and Utopia in the Andes* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 248.
2. Ibid.
3. Gabriel García Márquez, "The Solitude of Latin America" (Nobel lecture, Stockholm, Sweden, December 8, 1982).

Colombia in the Americas

Colombia in Relief

Chapter One

Origins

Present-day Latin America begins over two hundred years ago. The Spanish American independence movements that flared up in 1810 opened the way for the birth of the republics and, with them, the nation-states that today make up the majority of the American continent. This transformation did not happen overnight; it took almost a century for the process to unfold fully. Yet the origins can be traced to 1808, the year that Napoleon Bonaparte's troops invaded the Iberian Peninsula (today's Spain and Portugal), imprisoning the Spanish king in French lands. This surprising turn of events wrought a vexing problem: Who would govern the Spanish provinces?

Due to this early-nineteenth-century problem, Latin America's present has a clearly identifiable beginning. This is not to say that nothing has changed in the two hundred years since. The places that won independence from the Spanish Crown have had to identify the type of government that would best respect their needs; overwhelmingly, these nation-states adopted the form of a democratic republic. Colombia is one of them. The birth of Colombia can therefore be traced back to those first years of the nineteenth century, but Colombia's consolidation as a nation-state took over one hundred years to materialize.

This chapter outlines the events that occurred from 1808 to 1830. This was a period of "firsts": several models and ideas about the future of the state and society were debated, yet, at the same time, several civil wars were fought in an attempt to annul regional or ideological differences. In short, these were the years during which the world had changed for millions of people who inhabited Spanish America. In this chapter, we consider these transformations—ideological, political, economic, and territorial—for Colombia,[1] which were inextricably linked to simultaneous changes occurring throughout the Atlantic world.

But our starting point does not happen in a vacuum. Three centuries had passed since Spanish conquerors sighted the beaches of what would be called—much later—Colombia. No less important, these same conquerors found that these lands had been inhabited for thousands of years. The natives encountered were called Indians, since the Spaniards conjectured that they had arrived in that part of the world, and they found it convenient to generalize this denomination to all who lived in these lands prior to the Spanish arrival. This double temporal plane of our history before Independence, that of the millennia that we call the pre-Hispanic era and that of the centuries that we refer to as "Hispanic," all precede the beginning of our contemporary history. We must carefully consider the consequences of the previous periods, because the colonial, republican, and contemporary periods all reflect a geography that imprints a territory, populations, society, and a diverse, complex cultural development.

PRECEDENTS

Alonso de Ojeda, Juan de La Cosa, and Américo Vespucci are the first recorded Europeans who sighted land in present-day Colombia, Cabo de la Vela (Guajira Peninsula), in August 1499. The knowledge acquired on this trip by Juan de La Cosa motivated Rodrigo de Bastidas to hire him as chief pilot in the expedition that left Seville in September 1501 or January 1502. With Bastidas, he explored the entire Colombian Caribbean coast and part of the Panamanian coast, making forays to take gold from the natives who lived there, but the expedition headed for the island of Hispaniola without making any settlement. A few years later, Alonso de Ojeda, who had been appointed governor of Nueva Andalucía (all the territory from Urabá to Cabo de La Vela) in 1507, established the fort of San Sebastián de Urabá in 1510, but he was faced with strong resistance from natives, because they knew that in addition to taking their gold, the conquerors wanted to enslave them. He left that territory to seek support in Santo Domingo, a city from which he never returned, since he died there in 1516. The fort was abandoned, and in its place, Vasco Nuñez de Balboa founded Santa María la Antigua del Darién in 1510. This was the first city in what today we call Colombia, and one of the first of Spanish origin on the American continent.

However, the conquerors soon understood they were facing nations with different languages, customs, hierarchical regimes, productive capacities, and battlefield strategies. Thus, as the conquerors entered from different starting points toward the center of what is now Colombia, they verified the great number and diversity of peoples who inhabited these lands. The reason is

simple: since the beginning of the sixteenth century, the American continent had been populated for some twenty to thirty millennia—at the beginning by groups of hunters and gatherers who possessed stone tools, symbolic practices, and accumulated knowledge that allowed them to occupy the entire continent and differentiate themselves from their Asian ancestors, giving form to a myriad of distinct peoples. Many of them became tribal societies in which they began to complement hunting and gathering with horticulture and the elaboration of ceramic objects. Everything indicates that this phase occurred mainly in the hot and humid areas of the continent, places where the abundance of food allowed them to prosper. But a great change occurred when the cultivation of corn allowed many of these groups to look for more appropriate places to reside in the inter-Andean valleys and along the Andean slopes. This change in no way meant the disappearance of the tribal communities that preceded them, and in some areas, the groups of hunters and gatherers continued to roam vast territories in search of their survival.

Although the Spanish conquest paid little attention to the different levels of development of the native communities they faced, since what interested them was the rapid accumulation of precious metals, other valuable objects such as pearls, and even the indigenous people themselves as slaves, after the first few decades of generalized looting, they had to face the fact that if they wanted to continue inhabiting the territory thus conquered, they had to moderate their greed, vary the ways of relating to the locals, and permanently populate the territory, since simple military dominance was not a guarantee of prosperity. In this sense, it is important to take into account that the launch of different conquest expeditions, the directions and intensity they took, as well as their effects over time, responded to the way the country was populated before European arrival. That is, the presence of *cacique* (chiefdoms), tribal organized societies, or groups of hunter and gatherers in different zones reflected the complex geography of Colombia.

On the whole, the conquerors preferred to establish their dominance over the chiefdoms and not over the tribal societies that resisted until their annihilation, although in several cases their disappearance did not take place until the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth. The chiefdoms were complex, highly hierarchical societies, with domination of agriculture that was deployed in the different ecological niches that the Andean slopes offered, which gave rise to the use of different crops and access to a varied fauna and raw materials. Likewise, the payment of tributes was a common practice in these societies—a symbolic practice that was highly ritualized; members of these communities were often specialized in goldsmithing, ceramics, and textile making, or they were warriors, priests, or merchants. The clash between these communities and their conquerors was bloody and

devastating, but not to the point (in most cases) of annihilation—that is, the Spaniards were able to impose their dominance on and lay the foundations of the Spanish empire in America upon these pre-Columbian peoples.

The confederations of the Muisca and Tairona villages were the most complex chiefdoms encountered by the Spanish in present-day Colombia. Yet, the conquerors found societies with different degrees of complexity in different areas of the Andean and Caribbean regions, and which had unfolded autonomously by adapting to the particular conditions of the places they inhabited. For this reason, the list of chiefdoms or kingdoms that existed at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards is long. Some of the more significant ones are San Agustín, Tierradentro, Pastos, Quiyancingas, Quimbayas, Calimas, Guanes, Laches, Sinú, Pijaos, and many others. In relation to or in conflict with these chiefdoms, numerous tribal societies inhabited regions adjacent to them, with which they developed extensive commercial activity.

This complex pre-Hispanic settlement of the country meant that the exploration and conquest of what is now Colombia was the result of different expeditions, which took place mainly between the 1520s and the 1550s. The starting places were Cartagena and Santa Marta from the Colombian Caribbean coast, Coro in Venezuela, and Quito, the capital of present-day Ecuador. Likewise, several of the explorations followed the corridors formed by the Magdalena and Cauca Rivers, from which the Andean slopes and inter-Andean valleys were explored. This meant there would be a crew of main leaders of the conquest expeditions, such as Pedro de Heredia, Rodrigo de Bastidas, Sebastián de Belalcázar, Jorge Robledo, Nicolás de Federmann, and Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, all of whom were accompanied by captains who would later organize their own expeditions—Juan de Ampudia, Martín Galeano, Gonzalo Suárez Rendón, and Pedro de Ursúa, to name a few.

Each of these expeditions went from a phase of conquest to one of settlement, a change always marked by the founding of one or more cities. In this way, Santa Marta was founded in 1526, and from there, La Guajira, lower Magdalena, and the current departments of Cundinamarca and Boyacá. Cartagena was founded in 1533, and from there the current departments of Bolívar, Sucre, Córdoba, and Antioquia were settled. Cali was founded in 1536, and Pasto and Popayán in 1537, all three by Sebastián de Belalcázar or one of his captains. German conquerors, such as Ambrosio Alfinger (from Coro in present-day Venezuela, which they founded in 1529), traveled from the Maracaibo area to Valledupar and what is now Santander del Norte. The German Nicolás de Federmann traveled through parts of those areas, as well as the foothills toward the Llanos Orientals of Colombia. In February 1539, the expeditions of Jiménez de Quesada, originating in Santa Marta, and Sebastián de Belalcázar, who left Quito, and that of Nicolás de Federmann,

from Coro, met in the Sabana de Bogotá, a meeting that resulted in the foundation of Santafé de Bogotá, Vélez, and Tunja during the same year. The cities thus founded became, in turn, the origin of new expeditions, which likewise passed rapidly from a phase of conquest to another of settlement. For example, from Santafé de Bogotá, Tocaima was founded in 1544, and from there Ibagué in 1550; or from Vélez, Pamplona was founded in 1549.

The importance of founding a city or a town is that the *cabildo* (town council) was organized there, and this institution originated and exercised the government in the territory over which said city or town had jurisdiction. At the same time, when founding a city, in addition to designating plots and orchards to the settlers, the most "significant" founders were assigned one or several groups of Indians who thus remained under their stewardship, who in return had to pay tribute in kind or through work. This is what became known as the *encomienda*, which operated together with the *resguardo*, lands specifically assigned to the natives so they could pay tributes and obtain the necessary resources for their survival; there, a population center was constructed—an "Indian town" organized by the Spanish authorities. Residing in a city, town, or village of Indians thus became the constitutive element of the Spanish imperial regime in Colombia and throughout the continent.

These modalities of residence, in addition to others, such as the mining communities (*reales de minas*), were organized into provinces, and these, in *Audiencias*. These territorial units imparted justice in the assigned territories, but they also exercised civil and military governmental functions. The Audiencia de Santafé de Bogotá was created in July 1549 and began to meet in April of the following year, initially comprising the province of the New Kingdom of Granada (or what became known as El Reino, basically all the settlements of the Eastern Cordillera), that of Santa Marta, Cartagena, and Popayán, and later the governmental entities of Antioquia, Mérida, Guyana, and the *corregimientos* of Tunja and Mariquita. This reach of Audiencia remained until the Spanish Crown created the viceroyalty of Nueva Granada, first in 1717, abolished in 1723, to be definitively reestablished in 1739. The viceroyalty was given jurisdiction over the Audiencias of Santafé, Panama, Quito, and the Captaincy of Venezuela, which meant that the provinces of Cumaná, Caracas, Mérida, Maracaibo, Riohacha, Santa Marta, Cartagena, Panama, Veraguas, Chocó, Antioquia, Popayán, Quito, Cuenca, Guayaquil, Loja, Jaén, Mainas, Neiva, Mariquita, Santafé, Tunja, Pamplona, and Guyana were grouped under a single viceregal government.

Gold, mainly, but also silver and emeralds, were the main products that were of interest to the Spanish Empire in the territory now known as Colombia. These mining activities, in addition to the many other activities needed to supply the diverse and numerous populations, while keeping commercial

exchanges moving and supporting a large contingent of officials as well as artisans, clergy, and soldiers, required a sophisticated system of production and exchange. This system allowed for the accumulation of wealth and required the presence of a labor force made up of slaves, free and communal Indians (from the *resguardos*), *mestizos*, and poor whites. Women were subjugated regardless of whether they were white, *mestizo*, indigenous, or black slaves, and children did not mean much until they entered a productive age, and the family generally had an extended composition. This society was strongly hierarchical, although some social mobility was achieved through the purchase of titles and the "whitening" of genealogies.

However, this description is very general. The reality is that it is impossible to apply the socioeconomic description above to each of the territories of the Audiencia de Santafé, which at the end of the eighteenth century were the provinces of Santafé, Popayán, Neiva, Mariquita, Chocó, Antioquia, Socorro, Tunja, Pamplona, Casanare, Santa Marta, Riohacha, Cartagena, Panama, and Veraguas (see map No. 1.1); the same territories central to the viceroyalty, and today recognized as several of the departments of present-day Colombia. In this sense, it was the initial settlements that gave rise to the provinces and each one of these was somewhat different since they took shape from the relationships established in those places by those who populated the territory before the arrival of the Spaniards. In this way, the provinces resulted from the fact that in each region, a unique society and culture developed, and the only thing that kept them together was the fact that all were subjected to an overseas Empire—that is, the king and his administration. For this reason, as will be explained later, when the king was absent, each of those provinces had to decide which course to take. This is the origin of the republic of Colombia.

THE CRISIS OF EMPIRE

A tidal wave of transcendental transformations crashed over America 215 years ago. The Spanish Empire had crumbled to its foundations, and although it did not completely dissolve, it nevertheless suffered a serious crisis at the hands of Napoleon and his subsequent imprisonment of the Spanish monarchs in France. People throughout all of Spain's territories argued that this crisis signified that sovereignty had reverted to the people. They claimed their right to pass their own laws and elect their own leaders. Napoleon's occupation of the Iberian Peninsula and his decision to appoint his brother, Joseph, as king of all Spanish territories was the catalyst for the process of change in America whereby Spanish provinces became democratic republics. The cycle of bourgeois revolutions and the convulsions that shook the Atlantic world

beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, including the independence of the English colonies in North America, the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, and the almost-chronic war between the emerging British Empire and the veteran Spanish Empire, all influenced the direction politics would take with the collapse of the Spanish monarchy.

The crisis of the Spanish monarchy in 1808 therefore generated protests against *mal gobierno*, or "bad government." Protesters began calling for autonomy first, and full independence later. The monarchy's authority began dividing against itself when King Charles IV left governance of the entire kingdom to his favored minister, Manuel Godoy. Godoy's excesses sparked a conspiracy against both the minister and the king, led by the king's own son, Ferdinand. In March 1808, Charles IV was forced to abdicate the throne to his son, who assumed it as Ferdinand VII. In the meantime, French troops invaded the Iberian Peninsula. Their intentions to take control of the Crown soon became obvious, so Charles and Ferdinand traveled to Bayonne, France, to settle their differences in the presence of the French emperor, Napoleon. All the while, the Spanish people, in response to the French invasion, staged an uprising in Madrid on May 2, 1808, which was supported by the provinces as well as by Spain's territories in the Americas. In this sense, Spaniards and the Spanish Americans maintained their loyalty to Ferdinand VII, but when he was arrested by Napoleon, he was no longer available to govern. A crisis of leadership ensued. The response was immediate: the Spanish provinces (in Spain) formed *juntas*, or governing bodies, that swore loyalty to Ferdinand VII at the same time that they, in his absence, provisionally took control of government until his return. One of them, the junta of Seville, proclaimed itself the "Supreme Junta" and, as such, ordered all the provinces of the kingdom to swear loyalty to Ferdinand VII. To this end, it sent commissioners to all the territories. To the viceroyalty of New Granada (today's Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama), the junta sent Juan José Pando y Sanllorente. Solemn oaths were taken in all the principal cities of the viceroyalty, and the viceroyalty capital city, Santafé (today's Bogotá), swore loyalty to Ferdinand on September 11, 1808. Meanwhile, the Spanish triumphed over the French at the Battle of Bailén, which forced Joseph Bonaparte, or Joseph I, to leave Madrid. The peninsular provinces subsequently sent representatives to Madrid in order to form a central junta.

On September 25, 1808, in Aranjuez, Spain, the Supreme Central and Governing Junta of the Kingdom was established. Thus, the government was again centralized and managed to stop the autonomist movements that were occurring in the Spanish provinces. But the triumphs of the Spanish armies did not last long as the French successfully retook Madrid, forcing the Supreme Central Junta to retreat to Seville. From there, and over the course

of the following year, this was the junta who ruled in the name of Ferdinand VII over all the territories that he considered his personal patrimony.

The Supreme Central Junta considered any attempt at autonomy, either in the peninsula or in the Americas, an act of treason. The first men to make up the junta were delegates from the peninsular provinces, but the junta quickly accepted representatives arriving from the Americas. On January 22, 1809, it decreed that all the territories of the monarchy in the Americas were not colonies, but rather essential and integral parts of the monarchy itself and therefore eligible to send delegates elected by the respective populations. As a result, each one of the four viceroyalties (New Spain or Mexico, Peru, the New Kingdom of Granada, and Buenos Aires) and the six captaincy generals (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, Chile, Venezuela, and the Philippines) were given the opportunity to elect a representative, ten in total.

Ironically, this political calculation was ultimately the reason so many populations in Spanish America called first for autonomy and later for complete independence from Spain. Why? The decree of January 22, 1809, although it recognized the rights of all Spanish kingdoms to be represented in the Central Junta, nevertheless made it clear that the territories in the Americas and the Philippines would not receive fair and equal representation. The eighteen provinces in Spain, all of which were much smaller than the overseas territories in terms of both population and geographic territory, were each represented by two delegates, that is, thirty-six total. In other words, American creoles (American, born of Spanish heritage) wished to be recognized equally as legitimate descendants of Spaniards with the same rights as a Spaniard from Spain. The skewed representation that favored peninsular interests in the junta left no doubt in anyone's mind: the Americans were clearly not equal to Spaniards.

Despite protests, Spanish America nevertheless continued an electoral process in line with the instructions that arrived from the Supreme Central Junta. According to these instructions, each one of the viceroyalties and captaincies were to hold elections in the principal cities. The winner of each election would go on to compete for a final selection that would determine the representative for the respective territory. For New Granada, Antonio de Narváez y Latorre won the final elections on September 16, 1809. He did not travel to Spain, however. By the time he was ready to travel there, the Supreme Central Junta had dissolved.

The electoral process, together with the principle of representation that this process generated, were, no doubt, two political innovations of great importance for the coming days in the Americas. Equally important were the instructions given by the different *cabildos*, or "town councils," in New Granada to those individuals who would represent their interests to

the Seville junta. The town councils did much more than merely complain of the Americans' unequal representation in the junta or offer the familiar protests concerning the abuses of royal authorities. They went on to formulate enlightened ideas and true programs for governance. Narváez y Latorre received instructions from the *cabildos* of Santafé (known as the "Memorial de Agravios," or "Memorandum of Grievances"), Popayán, Socorro, Tunja, and Loja, among others. Similarly, he received a document written by Ignacio de Herrera y Vergara dated September 1, 1809, in Santafé with the title *Reflections of an impartial American for the delegate from this Kingdom of New Granada so that he may have them in mind during his delicate mission*.[2] Herrera wrote in this document that "the people are the fountainhead of absolute authority. They placed authority in the hands of a leader who could make them happy. The King is charged with this duty for his dominions."[3] Another document to be read in Spain, written by the town council of Socorro, signed October 20, 1809, called for "unproductive classes [to] be suppressed, reduction of redundant royal employment, lands and labor [should] be freed from excessive taxation and regulation, and that the imposition of taxes, their collection and distribution [should] follow the laws of justice within which the social contract has been determined."[4] They also asked that the delegate petition for the abolition of slavery and of the *resguardos*, or lands held for the exclusive use of Indians. They called for the freeing up of markets, reduction in the number of feast days and ecclesiastical tariffs, improvement of roads and education, and simplification of the civil and criminal law codes. In sum, the *cabildos* were proposing an actual program of government.

Meanwhile, back in Spain, at the beginning of 1810, the Supreme Central Junta's function collapsed and was replaced by the Regency Council, which was made up of five members. The council did not change any of the policies that the Central Junta had developed since 1808 concerning the American provinces. This meant that most Americans did not accept the legitimacy of the Regency Council to govern in the name of Ferdinand VII. This hesitation was reinforced by fear that Napoleon was about to achieve a definitive victory in Spain and Europe. The Americans, faced with the likely and total absence of their king, realized that they had to make quick and radical decisions about their future, which is exactly what they did.

1810: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JUNTAS

For New Granada, 1810 was a long year, which, for our purposes, lasted from September 1809 to February 1811. These eighteen months can be divided into four phases. The first, lasting from September 1809 until May 1810, saw

the outbreak of violent rebellions and counter-repression and the need for urgent decision-making. The second lasted from May to July 1810, when the first juntas were organized. The third witnessed the flourishing of the juntas, which lasted from the final days of July through September 1810. And, finally, the fourth phase, from August 1810 to February 1811, represented a period when the juntas consolidated their new administrations, took military actions against dissident provinces and populations, and attempted to give shape to one government for all the provinces that were part of the former Audiencia of Santafé.

During the first phase, beginning in September 1809, creoles from Santafé thought they should seriously consider the town council of Quito's formal offer to join that city's autonomous junta, which had been organized a month before, on August 10. As explained above, the creoles in Quito and Santafé, like those in other parts of Spanish America, believed French troops would triumph over the Spanish in Spain and increasingly considered the Supreme Central Governing Junta (in Spain) illegitimate. The Spanish viceroy in Bogotá, José Amar y Borbón, however, decided to respond to the invitation by completely blocking the organization of a junta in Santafé and violently repressing any attempts to organize. For the Spanish authorities in America, there was only one option: remain loyal to only one junta, the Supreme Central Governing Junta. The creoles believed there were other possibilities.

These creoles continued requesting that the viceroy accept the formation of a governing junta for the Audiencia of Santafé. Under pressure, Amar y Borbón accepted. He then convened a meeting on September 6, 1809, to discuss the events in Quito of August 10, 1809, while debating the possibility of organizing a junta for their own provinces in Santafé. Not much was accomplished at this meeting, but a few days later, on September 11, another meeting took place, which accomplished little more than the establishment of two opposing parties: one in favor of remaining subject to the Supreme Central Governing Junta and another that backed the idea of forming a separate junta for Santafé. With respect to rebellious Quito, the viceroy decided to send individuals, reinforced by armed forces, who would "negotiate" with the junta.

The failure of these meetings and the decision to force Quito to submit under armed pressure led to the second option: conspiracy. Several printed pamphlets circulated that explicitly favored the Quito junta. The viceroy subsequently issued an edict on September 28, 1809, making it an offense to carry "seditious" documents, threatening harsh punishments and prison for anyone caught with such documents. The first of several plots to overthrow Spanish rule, now remembered as the "Revolution of the Rocket," occurred two days later but failed: an anonymous tip to the viceroy gave him time to

Map 1.1. Provinces, 1810

preempt the planned revolt and imprison those he thought responsible for leading it. In a subsequent plot, a group of Santafé's residents figured out a way to take control of the armaments held by the royalist troops who marched toward Quito. The plan consisted of assaulting the soldiers, taking the arms by force, and sending the weapons to Socorro, a nearby town from where a more general insurrection could be launched. The plan failed due to poor planning by its leaders. Shortly thereafter, a rebellion broke out in Casanare, a plains region on the eastern side of Santafé's major mountain range. The purpose of this rebellion was to take the town of Pore on February 15, 1810, but the rebellion leaders were quickly captured. They were brought to trial, found guilty of treason, hanged, and decapitated, and their heads were sent to Santafé for public display. The heads (literally) arrived in the capital on May

13, 1810, but they were not displayed for fear they would spark another round of protests among the inhabitants of the city.

Due to the failure of the conspiracies, the Americans in New Granada opted for a third option: to organize—on their own—governing juntas in New Granada. This kicked off the second moment of the long year of 1810: the first round of autonomous governing juntas, which began on the Caribbean coast in the city of Cartagena on May 22. After this, a series of additional juntas emerged throughout New Granada: in Cali on July 3, in Pamplona the next day, and in Socorro on July 11. The viceroy, despite this clear trend, continued to repudiate any attempts at forming a junta in the capital. By July 20, 1810, there was little more he could do; creoles in Santafé organized a junta and proclaimed it the Supreme Junta of the Kingdom. These events, occurring during the months of May to July of 1810, signified that an important threshold, brought about by the agitated situation of the previous two years, had been crossed.

On Friday, July 20, a market day in Santafé, an altercation on the city square, planned by a group of creoles against a Spaniard, sparked a major rebellion. "Don José (González) Llorente, Spaniard and friend of the ministers who suppress our liberty, lashed out with less-than-decorous words against the Americans; this news spread quickly and exalted the spirits that already were disposed towards revenge. . . . All began meeting at the door of Llorente's store; the commotion brought more people, and in a moment numerous people could be seen, united and indignant against this Spaniard and against his friends."[5] From that moment, the events quickly snowballed. González Llorente was imprisoned due to the crowd's displeasure. That afternoon, three commissions arrived at the viceroy's house, demanding he convoke a *cabildo abierto*, or "open town council meeting." He refused to meet with the first two commissions, but agreed with the third commission that an extraordinary (i.e., unusual) *cabildo* could meet. Nevertheless, several creoles took it upon themselves to bring together vast numbers of people to the central plaza and stoked the crowd with haranguing speeches and complaints. Thanks to these demonstrations, by nighttime the extraordinary *cabildo* transformed into an open *cabildo*. By then it was clear—and the viceroy knew it—that the army would not act against the demonstrators. The plan worked: a junta was organized. At dawn on July 21, 1810, a document was signed that Colombians now refer to as their act of independence. Written by José Acevedo y Gómez, the act made clear the purposes and direction of the recently constituted junta:

> All authority will be placed provisionally in the Supreme Governing Body of this Kingdom, until this same Junta forms the Constitution that assures public happiness. The noble provinces will be counted on to send their representatives,

> and the resulting body will determine the regulations that will organize elections in said provinces. These regulations and the constitution of government should be based on liberty, the respective independence of the provinces, united only by a federal system, whose representation should reside in this capital so that it may oversee the security of New Granada. New Granada protests any attempts to abdicate essential rights belonging to the sovereignty of the people to any other individual than the august and disgraced monarch of Ferdinand VII, who will return to rule among us. For now, this new government is subject to the Supreme Regency Junta, as long as it exists in Spain, and on the Constitution that the people give it and in the terms stated.[6]

From this act, it becomes clear that "autonomy" was formally established on July 21, 1810. This autonomy was based on the right of the people to govern themselves through a constitution, to gather in a federal system, and to establish that the king was still king, but only if he were to come to New Granada and follow the norms of the written constitution. A turning point had been reached, and a clear separation from both Spain and the concept of absolute monarchy had been established.

July 21 and the immediate days thereafter were the focus of much agitation. The more radical element among the Americans, known as *chisperos*, or "spark makers" (or, less literally, fire starters), made it difficult for the Supreme Junta (in Santafé) to moderate their initial decisions about governance. Thus, by July 26, the junta finally declared that it no longer recognized the Supreme Regency Council, marking a decisive moment: no corporation or person located in or hailing from the peninsula would have authority over these lands, except for Ferdinand VII. Furthermore, the Santafé junta, which had declared that Ferdinand had to reside in Santafé, now established that he could not entrust any other person or institution with the authority that the people had invested in him. The next day, July 27, the junta was divided into sections so that it could more efficiently handle day-to-day governance, as had been planned only a few days earlier. The sections included: Ecclesiastical Business; Grace, Justice, and Government; War; Treasury; Police; and Commerce. On July 29, the junta sent to all provinces of New Granada an invitation to elect representatives to the General Congress of the Kingdom, which would meet in December 1810. On August 13, under pressure from the radicals, the former viceroy Amar y Borbón was placed under arrest, and on August 15, he was secretly sent to Cartagena. The following day, the junta silenced the radical *chisperos* by imprisoning their leaders.

The effects of the Santafé junta's decision to organize and refuse to recognize any authority emanating from the Regency Council were quickly felt throughout the former jurisdiction of Santafé's Audiencia, or "court." On the one hand, Cartagena's junta declared its opposition to the pretensions of

the Santafé junta to be "Supreme"; the Pamplona junta declared itself as a provincial junta apart from Santafé; the Cali *cabildo* began to act as a junta, however provisionally; and the junta of Socorro confidently drew up its own constitution on August 15. Simultaneously, several smaller cities and towns mobilized politically. Moreover, Santafé's July 29 invitation for the provinces to attend a Congress in December created the conditions for a new crop of juntas to sprout up throughout the former Audiencia over the course of the next two months. All communities that had served as heads of provinces, as well as many others who resented their relationship to their former governing rulers, proceeded to form their own governing entities and then elect a representative who would be sent to Santafé.

Next, the third period of this dramatic year of 1810 began taking form. In Tunja, on July 26, the residents organized an open town meeting, at which they refused to recognize the Regency Council and appointed the junta that would run the province's governance with the title "Patriotic Junta." That same day, the *cabildo* of Mariquita formed a government junta of its own, also the product of a *cabildo abierto*—an open town council meeting. Neiva did the same on July 27, taking care to heed the attorney general's request to organize a governing junta, one that, on August 13, proclaimed itself the Superior Provincial Junta. On July 30, the population of Girón gathered in the main plaza and requested that Father Eloy Valenzuela, a local priest, take charge of the town's destiny. Mompox went furthest fastest by declaring absolute independence not only from Spain, but also from Ferdinand VII and any attempt at foreign domination. Santa Marta, on the Caribbean coast, established its junta during an evening *cabildo* meeting on August 10. Popayán's junta constituted itself on August 11 and named itself the Provisional Junta of Health and Public Security. On September 6, the town of Garzón's leaders met to create an autonomous junta; their founding document included provisions that were less a junta's plan for governance policies and more akin to a constitution. On August 30, in Santafé de Antioquia, the Congress established a Superior Provincial Junta, which was attended by representatives from that city as well as Rionegro, Marinilla, and Medellín. Quibdó, in the region of Citará near the Pacific coast, declared its junta on September 1; Nóvita, in the same region, on August 27 (although other sources date its constitution from September 27). Finally, Pore created its Governing Autonomous Junta on September 13, 1810.

Elections characterized the fourth and final period of 1810, which were conducted and registered in several townships of New Granada. These were the elections that selected the representatives to the General Congress that would meet in December. Those who were elected from the different juntas took on the challenge of shaping the newly formed governments; to do this,

they followed the principles of separation of powers, the crafting of laws by specialized bodies, the abolition of monopolies and other obligations detested by the people, together with other principles that likely were inspired by the United States Constitution and that of France of 1791. Finally, the juntas prepared for war. They initially worried about a possible invasion by French troops and then shifted to a consideration of the reprisals the king might act upon if he were to return to the throne. These fears justified either subduing the dissident populations within provinces or invading the provinces that remained loyal to the Supreme Regency Council in Spain.

On December 22, 1810, the General Congress of the Kingdom met in Santafé. Cartagena boycotted the meeting from the very beginning, and signs that the Congress would fail were clear early on. Only those representatives from Socorro, Neiva, Pamplona, Mariquita, Nóvita, and Santafé attended; those from Sogamoso and Mompox were finally accepted, although the representatives present at the initial meeting did not unanimously approve these two representatives. Disagreements quickly developed over sovereignty and regional representational power, which resulted in the closure of the Congress during the first months of February 1811. In this way, with disunity and uncertainty looming, the long year of 1810 came to an end.

THE FIRST REPUBLIC (1811–1816)

The failure of the General Congress of the Kingdom led the former provinces of the Audiencia of Santafé to organize according to what each thought most convenient for their own interests. Three major political projects emerged: one sought a liberal republican order that adhered to a centralist, judicial political organization; another similarly considered republicanism but did not accept delegating sovereignty to another province and so embraced a federal program; and finally, the political order that remained loyal to the Regency Council in Spain and, as such, did not accept any change in the political order that existed prior to 1810. How a particular province adhered to a specific political project largely depended on which social groups held influence in a given region. Still, within each province, inhabitants were divided. The First Republic was, at its very inception, divided against itself. This meant that as different constitutional and government forms were considered and put into effect, civil war increasingly became inevitable. From 1811 to 1815, two major republics emerged: Cundinamarca and the United Provinces. Each was pitted against the other, and both attacked surrounding provinces that remained loyal to Spain to force them into their particular sphere of influence. Conflict diminished in 1815 when the United Provinces emerged victorious

over Cundinamarca, resulting in the unification of the republic. This unification did not change the tense relations between pro-republic provinces and those that remained loyal to Spain. On the contrary, years of violent skirmishes and political upheaval facilitated the easy triumph of the occupying forces sent from Spain after Ferdinand VII reassumed the throne in 1814.

First, the Republic of Cundinamarca was born on February 19, 1811, when the people decided to convoke an electoral college that would draw up a constitution for the province. The deliberations were quick; the constitution was promulgated on April 4, bringing a definitive end to the Supreme Junta that had been created on July 20, 1810. The constitution, organized into fourteen titles and several articles, declared that the province would be called Cundinamarca and would be run as a constitutional monarchy, reiterating Ferdinand VII as king with powers that were limited according to constitutional law. Cundinamarca's constitutional monarchy established a clear division of powers among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; determined that Catholicism would continue to be the official religion of its inhabitants; set electoral procedures, the organization of the army, and a tax code; and stated in Title XII that "the rights of man in society are: equality and liberty under the law; security and property," and that "sovereignty essentially resides in the universality of citizens."[7] This first constitution of what we now call Colombia thereby established a limited monarchy and included principles such as the separation of powers and the rights of man and citizen, and ultimately it served as a text that set the precedent for subsequent liberal constitutions.

The other provinces that had opted to separate themselves from the Regency Council, given the step Cundinamarca had taken, jealously guarded their own right to maintain sovereignty. They believed they had no other option but to organize their own forms of government founded on their own constitutions. But before even Cundinamarca's constitutional governments could form, one key issue needed urgent resolution: how to structure a state within which all provinces could participate while not requiring any one province to renounce sovereignty and, at the same time, allow all provinces to acquire the necessary power to defend themselves and be recognized as independent powers. Federalism, styled after the design of government in the United States of America, became the answer. But this step was not an easy one to take, nor did all the provinces accept it.

The president of Cundinamarca, Jorge Tadeo Lozano, presented a project to create a federal system. Simultaneously, independence leader Antonio Nariño, who was staunchly opposed to a federalist system, led a military movement against all manifestations of federalism. This polarization culminated in the violent overthrow of President Lozano in July 1811, and Nariño

assumed the post of president. Worried about these developments, several delegates from different provinces organized the Congress of Delegates, which would determine the best form of governance. The result was the Federation Pact.

This pact, signed on November 27, 1811, created the United Provinces of New Granada. Signed by the delegates from the provinces of Antioquia, Cartagena, Neiva, Pamplona, and Tunja, this agreement was not accepted by Cundinamarca or Chocó. Divided into seventy-eight articles, the pact's text established that governance would be in the hands of the Congress of Delegates, which could be called into session whenever necessary; that only those provinces that existed on July 20, 1810, were eligible to join the United Provinces, in addition to those that had already voluntarily joined. Finally, the pact stated that "the United Provinces of New Granada recognize each other mutually as equals, independent, and sovereign, guaranteeing for each other the integrity of their territories, their internal administration, and a republican form of government."[8] This form of governance promised equality for all so that peaceful relations could be maintained among the United Provinces.

The key political events that occurred between 1812 and 1815 were therefore all related to the ways in which each individual province wrestled with the type of government that would order its internal affairs and how each should relate to the surrounding provinces. Those that decided to remain loyal to Spain turned to the viceregal authority, located in Panama, and enjoyed a certain level of continuity in governance. The state of Cundinamarca defended centralism as its key constitutive form of governance and raised an army that attempted to force surrounding provinces, both royalist and federalist, into submission. In April 1812, Cundinamarca reformed its constitution even further, definitively abolishing all monarchical power in the state. It declared its absolute independence from Spain on July 13, 1813. The United Provinces, for their part, each developed their own constitutions: Tunja in 1811; Antioquia, Cartagena, Mompox, and Neiva in 1812; Popayán in 1814; and Mariquita and Pamplona in 1815. They, too, declared their absolute independence from Spain in those years. All these constitutions share similar, basic characteristics: division of powers; one president in charge of the executive power; recognition of the rights of citizens; the adoption of Roman Catholicism as the official state religion; and the establishment of an electoral system, a fiscal system, and a military and police force to maintain public order.

The civil war that ensued among these three major political groups—Cundinamarca, the United Provinces, and the provinces loyal to the king—was long lasting and bloody. Instead of putting human and economic potential to work for the emerging republics, such potential was enlisted for war. Neither

Cundinamarca nor the United Provinces was able to completely subdue the royalists, although efforts to do so were constant. Cundinamarca and the United Provinces in turn fought several important battles against each other. In December 1814, the United Provinces triumphed over Cundinamarca's army, thanks to the military leadership of Simón Bolívar. This victory brought an end to the Republic of Cundinamarca, but it could not establish a solid federal order, just as Spanish reconquest armies set sail from Cádiz to New Granada in February 1815.

THE FINAL BATTLE AGAINST ABSOLUTISM

Napoleon Bonaparte's demise allowed Ferdinand VII to return to Spain on March 22, 1814. While in the city of Valencia, he abolished (on May 4) the liberal Spanish constitution of 1812 and reestablished a reign of absolutism in all of his inherited territories in Europe, America, and Asia. To put his order into effect, especially in the American territories, he raised a powerful army of more than ten thousand soldiers headed by the renowned and successful military general Pablo Morillo. The army was sent to Venezuela and New Granada; after arriving at Margarita Island in July 1815, the Spanish forces headed to the Caribbean coastal city of Santa Marta. Morillo planned his attack on the United Provinces of New Granada from Santa Marta and decided first to lay siege to neighboring Cartagena on August 6, 1815. Cartagena fell on December 5, after suffering a disastrous six-month Spanish siege. This victory opened a clear path for Morillo and his troops, who quickly marched toward the interior of the country, arriving on May 26, 1816, in Santafé. The capital surrendered, and Morillo initiated a series of persecutions now remembered as the Régimen del Terror, or "Reign of Terror."

Prior to all this, during a particularly harrowing military campaign against the royalists in 1813, Simón Bolívar declared *guerra a muerte*, or "war to the death." This tactic showed no mercy toward any *Peninsulares* (Spaniards from the Iberian Peninsula) who fought against the patriots but pardoned all Americans, no matter their professed allegiance. Morillo arrived to find this decree still in effect and responded to it with even further cruelty against the Americans. Once in Santafé, he established the three pillars of the Reign of Terror: the Sequestering Junta was in charge of confiscating all properties belonging to the patriots; the Pacification Tribunal banished those who supported the patriot cause from the city, either by imprisoning them or exiling them; and the Permanent War Council was charged with the more extreme task of trying and executing those found guilty of treason. The few military men who remained in the Republic of the United Provinces just barely

escaped; some took refuge in the eastern plains of Casanare, from where they organized a weak but valiant resistance.

Such violent persecutions and abuses of Americans by Morillo ultimately played into Bolívar's plans. The inhabitants of New Granada believed they were suffering at the hands of Morillo for committing the "crime" of simply being born Americans. At this point, loyalty to the king was definitively severed. Guerilla groups emerged in surrounding mountain regions and found support through a network of urban spies who supplied information to the guerillas about the movement of royalist troops. Slowly, these groups managed to chip away at Morillo's military dominance. Increasing numbers of inhabitants came to view Morillo's army as an occupation force, and thus, recovering independence became the primary goal. To this end, the patriots sought to reestablish a state by inaugurating the Congress at the town of Angostura (in Venezuela—currently called Ciudad Bolívar) and raising an army that would be capable of defeating the Spanish. Simón Bolívar was at the forefront of both processes.

Bolívar left New Granada for Jamaica in May 1815. The fall of the Second Venezuelan Republic and the insurmountable challenge of politically uniting New Granada and leading military actions against the royalist provinces forced him to seek refuge in the Antilles. Once there, on September 6, 1815, he wrote his famous Jamaica letter, or "Answer from a South American to a Gentleman of This Island," where he carefully examined the situation of the Spanish provinces in America; ventured predictions about their future; and following what Francisco de Miranda (a Venezuelan) had proposed years earlier, recovered the name Colombia for the political entity that would take shape if New Granada (Colombia and Ecuador) and Venezuela could unite into one nation. Shortly thereafter, he left Jamaica for Haiti and, with the help of President Pétion, organized the Cayos expedition on March 20, 1816, a renewed effort to liberate Venezuela, which failed. By July 17, 1817, Bolívar successfully asserted control over the territory of Angostura, and a few days later, on July 24, he declared himself Supreme Chief of the Armies. Once Bolívar considered Angostura firmly under his control, he opened the Orinoco River to the British Legion, which entered Venezuelan territory through this route in order to strengthen the precarious military position of the patriot armies and provide valuable supplies and aid.

Later, on February 15, 1819, Bolívar inaugurated the Angostura Congress and accordingly reestablished the republic both in the eyes of local audiences and internationally. During the inaugural address at Angostura, Bolívar stated, "I have had the honor of bringing together the representatives of the people of Venezuela for this august Congress, fountain of legitimate authority, holder of sovereign will, and referee of the destiny of the Nation."[9] He

made it clear to the Congress that "the union of New Granada and Venezuela in a grand State has been the uniform vote of the people and governments of these Republics. Our luck in war has verified this link that is so very much desired by all Colombians; in effect, we are incorporated. These fraternal *pueblos* have trusted us with their interests, their rights, and their destinies."[10] Thus, the die was cast: the republic was reestablished, the army was strengthened, and Bolívar emerged as the clear military leader. The union between Venezuela and New Granada, under the new name of Colombia, was seen as an attainable goal.

One of the key military generals, who escaped from Pablo Morillo in Santafé and sought refuge in the eastern plains of Casanare, was Francisco de Paula Santander. The patriot army that held this eastern position in 1816–1817 was weak. Santander, with the help of Bolívar, rose among the military ranks, gaining the title of brigadier general. He was charged with organizing the patriot military groups dispersed throughout the vast plains region. His military prowess proved, Santander suggested to Bolívar that in order to liberate the entire northern region of South America from the Spanish armies, Santafé should be the primary target of liberation. Bolívar agreed. He inaugurated this new strategy on May 23, 1819, and on July 5, he began climbing the Andes from the east at an almost impassable point. On July 25, Bolívar led his troops to victory at the battle of Pantano de Vargas, and the following August 7, he scored a resounding military victory at the Battle of Boyacá, opening a clear path for his entry into Santafé three days later. With this victory, Bolívar did not, however, manage to completely liberate the New Granada territory from the Spanish. The harrowing path toward independence was a long one and lasted several more years. But this victory did manage to install in Santafé a government that could direct necessary military and political actions. Never again did Santafé fall to Spanish imperial dominion.

COLOMBIA: THE SECOND REPUBLIC (1819–1830)

A triumphant Bolívar returned to Angostura to announce to the Congress his military successes. With victory in hand, the Congress issued the Fundamental Law of the Republic of Colombia on December 17, 1819. The first article of the law established that "the republics of Venezuela and of New Granada are, from this day forward, united as one under the glorious title of the Republic of Colombia." The second article determined that the territory encompassed by the republic "will be that that made up the former Captaincy General of Venezuela and the Viceroyalty of New Granada." The fifth article divided the territory into "three large Departments: Venezuela, Quito, and

Cundinamarca, this last Department is the one that had previously comprised the United Provinces of New Granada, a name that from this day forward will not be used. The capitals of these Departments (or Administrative Territories) will be the cities of Caracas, Quito, and Bogotá, striking the word Santafé." The eighth article ordered the Congress of Colombia to meet again on January 1, 1821, at the township of Villa del Rosario de Cúcuta.[11]

This scheduled meeting occurred, but not until May 6, 1821. The following August 30, the attending representatives signed the Constitution of Colombia, known now as the Cúcuta Constitution or the Constitution of 1821, for the place and date of its signing. This constitution set up a centralist government but one that, as indicated in its second article, was a popular representative government. The population was to exercise sovereignty through elections, and the state's administrative powers were to be divided into legislative, executive, and judiciary branches. The Congress determined that Simón Bolívar would be president and Francisco de Paula Santander, vice president. Bogotá was to serve as the capital city. From that moment on, Santander, in effect, governed as Bolívar continued to lead the liberation armies, which were actively involved in military campaigns until 1826.

From 1821 to 1826, warfare continued, as did efforts to establish a stable form of state government. Maintaining the armies in military campaigns required enormous sacrifices for a population that struggled to build and

Map 1.2. "Gran" Colombia

maintain civil order. Colombians nevertheless created the conditions that allowed for the founding of universities, and they constructed institutions of government and administration. Later, they established steamship navigation up the Magdalena River and built railroads, schools, and roads. Colombians also initiated trade and industry, hired foreign experts and advisors, and built their own printing presses. In short, these and other activities symbolized the intense activity Santander engaged in during these first years of the republic despite limits imposed by the need to continue fighting against the Spanish armies.

Soon, difficult tensions emerged between the leadership of the military and that of civil society. Bolívar and Santander could not come to an agreement over priorities, and these problems were aggravated by the resentment that leaders in Quito and Caracas soon developed against the predominance Cundinamarca had acquired. The political situation grew worse as Bolívar and Santander became bitter enemies. By 1826, the Venezuelan city of Valencia held a boycott against the Santander administration. Bolívar rushed back to Bogotá from Peru en route to Caracas. He took the side of the Venezuelans against Santander and, in doing so, won the enmity of the people of Cundinamarca. The Cúcuta Constitution began to deflate, and with it the Republic of Colombia.

The two major factions in the conflict tried to negotiate their differences through a convention that took place in Ocaña from March to June 1828, but no agreement could be reached, and the pro-Bolívar delegation walked out. The convention collapsed and, essentially, the Cúcuta Constitution ceased to exist. At this point, Bolívar decided to take power for himself—as a dictator—and in essence declared his dictatorship by decree on August 23, 1828. He assumed dictatorial powers on the condition that he convoke open elections in 1830. Those opposed to Bolívar became radicalized, and on September 25, 1828, they attempted to assassinate him. Bolívar survived the attempt on his life, but politically, he could no longer establish order in the territory. To make matters worse, in March 1829, Peru declared war against Colombia, forcing Bolívar to revisit the battlefield. Upon Bolívar's return to the capital city in January 1830, Congress had already met once more to approve a new constitution, and the Venezuelans had voted in favor of separation from Cundinamarca; the Ecuadorians were similarly inclined. Colombia had simply ceased to exist. This is how Bolívar understood the succession of events; he subsequently resigned the presidency, bade farewell to his few remaining friends in Bogotá, including his lover, Manuela Sáenz, and went into exile. He died in the coastal city of Santa Marta on December 17, 1830, a bitter and broken man. The general's gradual, months-long descent from the highlands of Bogotá to the coastal city of Santa Marta in 1830 is movingly depicted in

the 1990 historic novel *The General in His Labyrinth.* The book was written by Gabriel García Márquez.

THE END OF AN ERA OF CHANGE

Many factors, not the least of which included Bolívar's death, came together to create the conditions for the civil war that brought to a close the Second Republic in 1830. Bolívar's dictatorship, the conspiracies against him, the war with Peru, the numerous rebellions against the Colombia regime, the open rebellion of Venezuela against the national government in Bogotá, the efforts by the council of ministers to establish a constitutional monarchy, the overwhelming disagreement with which so many greeted the recently issued constitution, and in particular the presence of Venezuelan troops in Bogotá were all contributing circumstances.

The so-called rebellion of the Callao Battalion marked the beginning of the end. The battalion, comprising primarily Venezuelans, was under the command of an ardent Bolivarian, Rafael Urdaneta. He dominated Bogotá politics, yet the new president of the republic, Joaquín Mosquera, refused to increase the number of soldiers as requested by Urdaneta. Similarly, he refused to name Urdaneta as minister of war. At "El Santuario," a place near Bogotá, troops from the opposing parties clashed in a violent battle. The Venezuelans emerged triumphant. The Constitution of 1830 became null and void, as did the positions of the government officials elected under its mandate. These men resigned, and the Municipal Council of Bogotá, on September 5, 1830, ratified a petition that named General Urdaneta as leader.

The death of Bolívar three months later changed the course of events. Urdaneta's legitimacy rested on the requests that Bolívar return to Bogotá to assume control of Colombia. The Venezuelans in Bogotá no longer had Bolívar as an excuse to impose their will. Although initially the actions taken by the Venezuelan Urdaneta were to pursue mercilessly any man suspected of conspiracy, the reality of events forced him to negotiate peace. The two factions met in the Juntas of Apulo at the end of April 1831. There, all parties agreed to settle their differences, accept the separation of Venezuela and Quito, and foment the union of the provinces deemed to belong to Cundinamarca under one government until a new convention could create a satisfactory political arrangement. And so it was: Urdaneta resigned his post and returned to Venezuela. On October 20, 1831, the constitutional assembly met, and on February 29, 1832, the new constitution was approved. This constitution gave birth to the Republic of New Granada.

NOTES

1. In this chapter, we use the name *Colombia* generically to refer to the Republic of Colombia with the understanding that the country had different names from 1810 through 1886.

2. In Spanish, the title is *Reflexiones que hace un Americano imparcial al diputado de este Nuevo Reino de Granada para que les tenga presente en su delicada misión*.

3. Ignacio de Herrera y Vergara, "Refleciones que hace un americano imparcial al diputado de este reino de Granada para que tenga presentes en su delicada misión," in Ángel Rafael Almarza and Armando Martínez, eds., *Instrucciones para los diputados del Nuevo Reino de Granada y Venezuela ante la junta central gubernativa de España y las Indias* (Bucaramanga: Universidad Industrial de Santander, 2010).

4. Cabildo de la Villa del Socorro, "Instrucción que da al diputado del Nuevo Reino de Granada a la Junta Suprema y Central Gubernativa de España e Indias," in Almarza and Martínez, *Instrucciones*.

5. Francisco José de Caldas and Joaquín Camacho, "Diario Político de Santafé de Bogotá," Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, *Revolución de 20 de julio de 1810. Sucesos y documentos* (Bogotá, 1996), 118.

6. "Acta de la Independencia," in Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, *Revolución del 20 de julio*, 75–76.

7. "Constitución de Cundinamarca, 1811," in Manuel Antonio Pombo and José Joaquín Guerra, *Constituciones de Colombia*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1951), 188–90.

8. "Acta de Federación de las Provincias Unidas de la Nueva Granada," in Pombo and Guerra, *Constituciones de Colombia*, vol. I, 210.

9. Simón Bolívar, "Discurso pronunciado por el Libertador Simón Bolívar ante el Congreso de Angostura el 15 de febrero de 1819, día de su instalación," *Wikisource*, www.wikisource.org. Accessed June 3, 2011.

10. Ibid.

11. "Ley fundamental de la República de La Gran Colombia," *Wikisource*, www.wikisource.org. Accessed June 3, 2011.

Chapter Two

The Colombian Nations

We think of nation-states as unified sociopolitical entities; however, Colombia contains a large number of ethnic groups, including indigenous, Afro-Colombians, gypsies (Rom), and a large *mestizo* population resulting from the mixing that began in the sixteenth century among Europeans, people indigenous to the Americas, and African slaves. Thanks to these particular historical population dynamics, Colombia became a country of nations, that is, a country that is composed of communities with profoundly different traditions in terms of their language, customs, practices, and beliefs. After centuries of subjugation, epic struggles, and contentious debates, Colombian ethnic diversity was finally recognized at the national level through the 1991 constitution; Title I, article 7 legally recognizes and protects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the nation. Nevertheless, such institutional acceptance of diversity has not always been evident.

Considering patterns of population distribution over the course of the past two centuries, we begin with the provinces of the Audiencia of New Granada on the eve of independence. By the start of the nineteenth century, the majority of the population lived in towns and cities or relatively close to population centers. People tended to settle in temperate regions, somewhere between one thousand and two thousand meters above sea level in plateaus and valleys formed by three branches of the Andes Mountains that crisscross the country, or along the Caribbean coast. Since independence, however, populations and population centers have moved considerably, expanding the agricultural frontiers to include and occupy all possible ecological niches of an ecologically diverse country. In general, migratory trends have been driven by population expulsions in different regions and by a concentration of land ownership in the hands of few people. People have pushed (and have been pushed) into areas that over the course of the nineteenth century were considered *baldías*,

or "unoccupied state lands." During the twentieth century, populations began occupying rain forest areas, which until then were inhabited only by indigenous groups that had never fallen under Spanish colonial dominion.

Today's map of Colombia was initially and laboriously constructed during the nineteenth century. Modern surveying techniques show a country with several large cities and population centers that hold more than 80 percent of Colombia's total population, but almost all of these cities are concentrated in the Andean region and along the Caribbean coast. This overwhelmingly urban population obscures the country's rural past that was reconstituted after independence and that emerged out of the nineteenth-century colonizing movements and survival strategies employed by indigenous groups, Afro-Colombians, *mestizos*, and Europeans. Thus, social tensions caused by population movements that, in the twentieth century, gravitated toward new and rejuvenated cities, contain one of the keys to contemporary Colombian history: this migratory process helps us historicize "La Violencia" of Colombia.

This chapter explains the emergence of contemporary Colombia by taking into consideration Colombia's multiethnic composition and urban dominance over rural areas. Demographic dynamics and population movements over the past two centuries best illustrate this aspect of Colombian history.

COLOMBIAN INDIGENOUS POPULATION

Today, Colombia—about five hundred years after European conquest—is a country with an important indigenous and African presence. In late 2022 as this third edition is being developed, about fifty-two million people live in Colombia. This is based on a United Nations estimate from mid-2022. The last "official" Colombian census is from 2018, and the official number of Colombians, according to that census, is 48,258,494. Thus, of that population,[1] 3.95 percent of the total population identified as indigenous—up from 3.4 percent in the 2005 census. Meanwhile, about 9.37 percent of the total population are classified as NARP (Negro, Afrocolombiano, Raizal, and Palenquero); Raizal are the people who have inhabited the islands of San Andrés and Providencia in the Caribbean. These statistics show how individuals who answered the census self-identified, not what a government official perceived while taking down information. We therefore have close to 14 percent of Colombians who consider themselves ethnically different from the *mestizo* population (mixed-race persons) majority or the whites who descended from Europeans. Without taking into account the small percentage of the population who did not respond to the question concerning ethnicity on the 2018 census, 78 percent of the Colombian people identify as either

mestizo or white. It is difficult to establish absolute clarity concerning these categories because in Colombia, after five centuries of population mixing, ethnic/racial categorization is largely subjective.

The indigenous communities are characterized by their diversity: eighty-seven different ethnicities exist, speaking sixty-seven non-Spanish languages. They are present throughout the country, although the greatest number—forty-eight groups—live in the Amazonian region. This also means that the Amazon has the smallest percentage of *mestizos* and whites, although their numbers currently are growing rapidly through colonization and displacement of indigenous peoples. In the Andean region of Colombia, where *mestizos* and whites predominate, thirteen indigenous groups claim a presence, and they also hold a similar proportion in the eastern Orinoco region. The Orinoco region, nevertheless, is less densely populated in absolute terms. The Caribbean coast is home to ten indigenous groups, and the Pacific coast claims six groups.

These indigenous ethnic groups are the survivors of five centuries of domination by white, *mestizo*, and even Afro-Colombian populations. It is impossible to know precisely how many people lived in the territory today called Colombia prior to the arrival of the Spaniards, who probably reached what is today Colombian territory in 1510; however, four million is a generally accepted figure. By some estimates, sixty years after contact, only 1.5 million indigenous people remained in Colombia—paradoxically, in the areas where most of the Spaniards lived. They also lived in the dense jungles, where no contact with Europeans had occurred. By the middle of the seventeenth century, only about five hundred thousand indigenous remained in the territory that is today Colombia, representing a dramatic decline from a century earlier.

With the passage of time, the surviving populations tended to stabilize and even showed signs of demographic growth. There were two major reasons for this: the first is related to the kinds of measures the Spanish Crown took to protect Amerindian populations. These included the *Leyes Nuevas*, or "New Laws" of 1542, which offered judicial and ecclesiastic protection to Native Americans, combined with the implementation of the *resguardo* regimen (reserved lands to be used only by indigenous peoples). The *resguardo* began at the end of the sixteenth century and lasted well into the nineteenth century in some areas. The second, perhaps more significant reason for the survival of indigenous groups is found in the kind of cultural resilience and resistance that indigenous communities developed—that is, their agility at using the Spanish colonial system to their advantage. For example, by 1810 many indigenous groups disagreed with the independence movements, believing that the king of Spain provided the best form of protection against those *mestizos* and creoles (American-born whites) who seemed hungry for their land.

Map 2.1. Regions

To remain loyal to a distant king seemed to suggest that their interests would be protected via the laws and stipulations noted above. They understood that by becoming independent "citizens," they would lose their lands and would be forced to work as wage laborers. The powerful civilizing project of the emerging nineteenth-century nation-state sought to consolidate the nation into an ideal republic of citizens. As such, it could not accept groups of people in the country who were deemed "different" from all citizens raised according to the dominant Western model. Indigenous populations would have to adapt to a growing market economy. Some of these communities became peasant societies that grew economically dependent on absurdly inadequate parcels of land, or through tenant farming—both of which held thousands of people hostage in rural poverty. Therefore, the history of rural communities during the twentieth and first part of the twenty-first century has been, on the one hand, a story of people's struggles against rural poverty and, on the other, the political mobilization of indigenous peoples in defense of their lands, their languages, their practices, and their beliefs.

During the twentieth century, thousands of poor, rural residents were expelled from their lands in the Andean and Caribbean regions. At about the same time, large-scale farming, forestry, and mining projects had devastating effects on indigenous communities that historically had little contact with white or *mestizo* people. These factors culminated in the mass migration, voluntary and forced, of thousands of people into particularly sensitive ecological regions such as the Orinoco and Amazon River basins, the rain forest areas of the Pacific, and the *llanos* (eastern plains) near Venezuela. Former rural peasants of the Andes and Caribbean became the new colonizers of regions that had been occupied by indigenous groups, and these *colonos* (tenant farmers/rural poor) colonized remote border regions. Recently, the magnitude of the demographic and ecological tragedy has grown incalculably, devastating indigenous groups as they become overwhelmed by colonizing rural peoples, large landowners, and agro-industrialists—not to mention drug traffickers, insurgency groups, and criminal networks. The mostly forgotten stories of conquest that occurred during the colonial period have been, in essence, reborn in recent times.

Therefore, although Colombia is not a country whose population is primarily indigenous; many neighboring nations have a higher percentage of indigenous peoples—Bolivia, for example. Colombia does have a significant percentage of Amerindians protected by the constitution of 1991 who are proud of their traditions. Nevertheless, they confront social and economic pressures that threaten both their continuity as ethnic groups and their right to exist as communities in the future. Independence for these populations was not about freedom from Spanish domination, a struggle that began in

1810. This was the independence that whites and *mestizos* believed in and mobilized for. Rather, the rest of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century signified, for Colombian indigenous groups, a series of struggles for recognition of their rights that culminated in passage of the Colombian constitution of 1991.

THE AFRO-COLOMBIAN POPULATION

Colombia ranks third in the Americas for the largest population of peoples of African ancestry, after the United States and Brazil. According to the 2018 census, about 10 percent identify as Afro-Colombian via a category introduced in the most recent census—NARP: Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, and Palenquero. *Raizal* is a term used for people born on the islands of Sán Andrés and Providencia; *palenqueros* are people born in the "Palenque de San Basilio," which is a section of the municipality of Mahates in the Department of Bolívar, near the city of Cartagena. This community was formed by fugitive slaves—people with distinct languages and ethnicities who have created, what is today, a unique language and culture near the north coast of Colombia. It's possible, though, given that self-reporting is notoriously unreliable, as people tend to report toward white and away from black categories, that the percentage of people with Afro-Colombian ancestry could be somewhere between 26 to 29 percent, or roughly fifteen million people, distributed throughout the country, including areas as remote as the Orinoco and the Amazon River basins. For socioeconomic and historical reasons, many Afro-Colombians are concentrated in the Chocó Department (along the Pacific coast), where they (together with Indigenous populations) make up 78 percent of the total regional population; the Island Department of San Andrés and Providencia, where they make up about 44 percent; and in the Departments of Bolívar (16 percent), Valle del Cauca (15 percent). However, increasing poverty and violence during the twentieth century have caused mass displacement of individuals and family groups from their homes to large cities. Thus, Cartagena, Cali, Barranquilla, Medellín, and Bogotá currently are home to perhaps 20 to 30 percent of the total Afro-Colombian population.

The majority of Afro-Colombians, unlike indigenous populations, do not differentiate among themselves according to ethnic distinctions with different languages or cultures. The vast majority of people who claim African ancestry in Colombia descended from those who arrived as a result of the colonial-era slave trade. This trade began in the sixteenth century, and one of the most dynamic—that is, profitable—centers of the European slave trade took place at the port city of Cartagena de Indias in what is today the

north coast area of Colombia. There, slave traders and owners attempted to impede the emergence of solidarity among slaves by deliberately intermixing individuals from different ethnic tribes. These strategies were not always successful. And while common places of origin and the hardships of the slave ship may have had initial bonding effects on some slaves in the Americas, the day-to-day experiences people lived and shared, the family and kinship bonds they developed over time, and the strategies they used to create meaning for their lives all influenced the ways in which people from Africa adapted to and adopted the specific places where they resided in the Americas as their own.

The community of San Basilio de Palenque, in the Bolívar Department of Colombia, is a significant example of Afro-Colombian adaptation. This *palenque*, or "runaway slave community," developed toward the beginning of the seventeenth century and grew rapidly as a result of ever increasing numbers of arriving fugitive slaves. The *palenque* eventually developed its own identifiable language and culture, the result of the long-term shared experiences among individuals whose origins hailed from different regions of Africa. In addition to these Colombian *palenqueros*, another group of people of African ancestry lays claim to a distinct culture and language: the *raizal* community that populates the Colombian Caribbean islands of San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina. The people on these islands arrived from Jamaica and other English colonies in the Antilles. As a result, these *raizal* communities speak a kind of mixed creole language closer to English than Spanish, and the majority of them are, religiously, Baptist, not Roman Catholic like the majority of Colombians.

Other Afro-Colombians also claim a distinct ethnic status and are recognized as such: those who inhabit the Pacific corridor that runs through the Departments of Chocó, Valle, Cauca, and Nariño. Similarly, there is a dense population of Afro-Colombians and other mixed-race populations in the Caribbean region and the Magdalena River basin, but some deny African heritage for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the long-standing undercurrent of discrimination and exclusion of people with African ancestry in Colombia. Furthermore, the people who have been displaced from the Pacific region and the Caribbean to major cities as a result of systematic acts of racially charged violence claim an *afrodes* ancestry, a name that carries the double meaning of African "descendants" (*descendiente*) and "displaced" (*desplazado*), as in forced to leave their homes in Colombia. Some individuals who make up these new urban Afro-Colombian populations have found ways of coping with—and adapting to—their new surroundings by employing familiar strategies, such as creating community around common origins or around common experiences focused on the devastating reality of displacement and dislocation.

Independence from Spain did not result in an immediate and significant change for slaves or free blacks. Although *Peninsulares* (people from Spain) and patriots offered freedom to the slaves who fought among their ranks, this meant that manumission (freeing of slaves) simply became a recruiting tool for both sides during the early nineteenth century wars of independence. The constitution passed in Cúcuta in 1821 offered freedom only to slaves born after the inauguration of the constitution. Called *ley de libertad de vientres*, or "free womb" law, slaves who met the 1821 requirement would be free after their twenty-first birthday. At this time, freed slaves did not obtain recognition of their citizenship, nor was there any semblance of equality for ex-slaves when compared with whites or *mestizo* men, who were the only ones with citizenship rights in the new republic, provided they met the constitutional requirements of property and salary which meant "male," over twenty-one years of age, and owners of property in the form of land or capital, and with the ability to read. Finally, in 1851, freedom for all slaves who inhabited the country was decreed. From that moment on, any and all forms of slavery were outlawed.

Many of the freed slaves settled in the mining areas of the Pacific and lived along the major rivers of the Andes that emptied into the Caribbean Sea and along the Caribbean cities on the north coast. The majority of freedmen remained in these areas, which explains the dense concentration of Afro-Colombians in these regions today. Descendants of the freed slaves from the nineteenth century are now small-scale farmers and poor miners living in rural areas or artisans and merchants living in urban areas. Some have been able to integrate more fully into a society that predominantly self-identifies as *mestizo* or white. These are the people who best adapted and took advantage of the opportunities offered by living in larger cities. For this reason, their historical relationship with discrimination is analogous to the plight of indigenous populations—that is, independence did not bring immediate emancipation to African slaves—or political and economic equality for descendants of Africans in Colombia. Political struggles during the twentieth century ultimately brought about greater recognition for Afro-Colombians; such recognition was finally codified as "rights" in the constitution of 1991.

OTHER COLOMBIANS

In addition to the aforementioned groups, a small community of gypsy origin, also known as the Rom, lives in Colombia. According to the census of 2018, the Romani/Gitano population is about twenty-nine thousand people. They are organized into families that live primarily in the cities of Bogotá, Girón,

and Cúcuta and arrived in the country after independence, taking advantage of the loosening restrictions that had kept them out of Spanish America during the colonial era. Often they were fleeing the difficult discriminatory situations they faced in nineteenth-century Europe and, later in history, during the two world wars. Although the Colombian constitution of 1991 guarantees their right as a "nation" and not just as individuals, there has been historic discrimination against the Colombian Rom, and recently, many have been accused of participating in illegal narcotics trafficking.

Another significant number of Colombians descend from those who migrated during the late nineteenth century from Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon. Most were escaping violence dating from the Crimean War through the Arab-Israeli conflict of the middle of the twentieth century. A significant number arrived from Lebanon in the period after World War II. Barranquilla was the major Caribbean port through which these populations arrived, and the highest density of people from the Arab world initially settled in the cities on the Caribbean coast, where today their cultural influence is palpable. Slowly, these immigrants and their children moved toward the interior of the country via the Magdalena River. The majority of these individuals self-identify as Colombian, yet in some ways they avail themselves of the constitutional principle that affords autonomy to ethnicities in order to gain special rights. By far, these citizens of Middle Eastern origin are the most numerous population of foreign origin in the country.

Generally speaking, however, Colombia is not a country made up of foreign immigrants. Except for the initial dynamics that brought Spaniards and Africans to Colombia, after independence, colonies of foreigners are notable precisely for their relative absence in Colombian society. This is quite different from Argentina and Brazil—to mention two other South American cases. Although some people from Germany, England, France, and Italy arrived in Colombia during the nineteenth century, they did not migrate in such significant numbers as to vary the demographic makeup of the country, but just enough to influence—to some degree—elite customs, tastes, and sensibilities. The twentieth century witnessed a greater variety in terms of the sending countries, but not a significant increase in the total number of immigrants. The majority of people who arrived assimilated into the urban society of Colombia, intermarrying with national families.

Notably, the Jewish presence in Colombia is traced to the early nineteenth century with the onset of formal separation from a restrictive, Inquisition-oriented Spain; Jews "hid" in Colombia (and throughout Spanish America) during the colonial period, but early-nineteenth-century independence from Spain allowed for more openness, fewer restrictions, and greater tolerance for Colombian Jews. In the twentieth century, a significant group of Jews

immigrated to Colombia as a result of the breakup of the Ottoman Empire (after the First World War) and European persecution of Jews that occurred before and during the Second World War.

DEMOGRAPHY AND ITS NUMBERS

Colombia is a nation of *mestizos*. Today, about 86 percent of the population is either *mestizo* or white which is the result of a significant population boom that occurred during the twentieth century. The first census taken of the population of the independent republic was in 1825, but it was never officially accepted due to deficiencies in the procedure by which it was conducted. The 1825 census nevertheless identified a total of 1,129,200 people for what is today considered Colombia, at that time referred to as the Department of Cundinamarca. Considering the entire population of what was then considered the Colombian republic (Gran Colombia), that is, the union with Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama, the total population reaches 2,583,799. This means, therefore, that Cundinamarca was the most populated department that made up the fledgling independent nation-state, since it held close to 50 percent of the total population.

Table 2.1 shows how during the two hundred years of the Colombian republic, the population multiplied roughly forty-two-fold. This growth, that in absolute terms is constant, does not hold to a steady rhythm over the years: during the nineteenth century the total population multiplied threefold (from 1,129,200 in 1825 to 4,122,000 in 1905), whereas during the period 1905 to 2018 (reflecting census data from those two dates), the total population

Table 2.1. Population, 1825–2018

Census Date	*Total*	*Census Date*	*Total*
1825	1,129,200	1918	5,855,077
1835	1,570,900	1928	7,851,110
1843	1,812,600	1938	8,697,041
1851	2,105,600	1951	11,548,172
1864	2,441,300	1964	17,484,508
1870	2,713,000	1973	20,785,235
1887	3,666,000	1985	27,837,932
1898	4,183,000	1993	33,109,840
1905	4,122,000	2005	41,468,384
1912	5,972,604	2018	48,258,494

Source: Colombia, "Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística"—DANE. The statistics for the nineteenth century are approximate since no census from that century has been officially accepted; the same applies for the census of 1905.

multiplied more than eleven times (from 4,122,000 to 48,258,494). This suggests that quality of life improved, to some extent, for most Colombians over the course of the twentieth century.

In demographic terms, the average rate of growth was about 1.6 percent during the first seventy-five years of the nineteenth century. From 1875 to 1900, that percentage grew to an average of 1.8 percent, reflecting some improvement in public health conditions in cities, the development of hospitals and medical care in urban and rural areas, and a more focused approach to tackling epidemic diseases. However, modern public health campaigns did not really begin until the early twentieth century, reflected in an average life expectancy of twenty-nine years at the end of the nineteenth century; this reality profoundly affected social customs in the nation. For example, large families were the norm at this time, people married at an early age, and very young women—teenagers in today's parlance—bore children and often died in childbirth. Colombia, unlike Argentina, Brazil, or Chile, did not grow its population via immigration, given the low number of European immigrants arriving in the republic at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The twentieth century witnessed a substantial change in this situation. Favorable transformations in terms of quality of life occurred first in cities, followed by similar changes in many surrounding Andean towns. The rest of the country slowly moved along this continuum, which allowed for life expectancy to surpass seventy years at the turn of the twenty-first century. The lowering of mortality rates, a greater coverage of health care for urban and rural populations, improved hygiene—in short, the progressive growth in the number of physicians and health-care institutions compared with the growth of the rest of the population—caused the average annual rate of population growth during the first half of the twentieth century to reach 2.2 percent. These positive demographic shifts, together with difficulties of implementing family planning given the conservative Catholic beliefs that dominated society, resulted in a demographic explosion in the 1960s and 1970s. During these decades, the average rate of population growth was almost 3 percent. At the same time, mass migration from rural areas to cities proliferated, thanks in part to state policies. These changes are clearly reflected in the urban nature of today's Colombia.

Although the turn of the twenty-first century has seen a marked reduction in the rate of population growth, the trend in recent years has favored urban growth. Now, Colombians who were born during the population boom of the 1960s and 1970s are in the midst of their most productive stage of life, a phenomenon that does not intersect with the number of available jobs. The resulting poverty has led to the rapid growth of insurgency groups, drug

trafficking gangs, and other criminal enterprises. Taken together, this "social crisis" is one of the most daunting challenges faced by all of the Colombian people today.

Three additional characteristics of the Colombian population during the two centuries of the republic are worth noting. First, according to the 2018 census, 51.4 percent of the Colombian population is female, a percentage that has remained largely unchanged since the end of the colonial period. Second, what has changed, and dramatically so, is the relationship between urban and rural areas in demographic terms. In 1938, 31 percent of the population lived in municipal capitals, which meant that 2,700,000 people lived closer to urban life than rural life. The rest of the six million Colombians lived either in the countryside and populated small villages, or they lived dispersed among the mountains and valleys of the country. This style of life, which we examine below, had been inherited from the nineteenth century and contrasts sharply with the census of 2018, which estimates that 84 percent of the population reside in municipal capitals (plus "population centers") with clear urban lifestyles and social practices. Third, the way in which the population is spatially distributed in Colombia has remained constant. There have been some variations due to recent trends in colonization, but where people have chosen (or in many cases, been forced) to live has remained largely constant over the course of the past two hundred years. According to the most recent census, the vast majority of Colombians live in the mountainous Andean region, preferably in areas between one thousand to two thousand meters above sea level; 20 percent live in the valleys of the Caribbean, and only 5 percent populate the immense territories of Colombia's Amazon and Orinoco River basins; 3 percent of Colombians are distributed in the jungles and rain forests of the Colombian Pacific corridor, and about 2 percent[2] have left the country for economic or political reasons.

COLONIZERS AND SETTLERS: THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Given the trends studied in the previous section, the preference of Colombia's inhabitants has been, since at least the colonial era, to inhabit the temperate and colder regions of the Andes and, to a lesser extent, the plains along the Caribbean basin. Table 2.2, which presents the census information taken in 1789 by the Spanish rulers, emphasizes this point.

The Andean provinces of Tunja, Santafé, Popayán, Antioquia, Mariquita, and Neiva held the majority of the population at the end of the eighteenth century: 70 percent. That population was distributed among thirty-nine cities and villas and 331 Indian towns (*Pueblos de Indios*). The Caribbean provinces of

Cartagena and Santa Marta held 25 percent of the population in twelve cities, fifty-six Indian towns, and fifty *sitios* (places identified as populated by free people of color). The remaining 5 percent of the population lived in only one city and twenty-nine Indian towns in the extensive regions of Orinoquía, Amazonia, and the Pacific region of New Granada. With independence and the growing population of the nineteenth century, the primacy of key cities in different regions did not change, but significant movements of population did occur, which ultimately changed the character of the country. Colonial trends in urbanism gave way to the first republican century, and Colombia remained largely a rural/peasant nation. But many people began populating new lands that depended on recently founded hamlets or those towns and villages that the republic inherited from the colonial era. These new towns proved essential to providing a modicum of "national" unification. The towns offered newly arriving inhabitants the opportunity to link up with a market economy and receive the public services of the state, however weak the state may have been. Table 2.3 and map 2.2 offer a study of the direction and magnitude of population movements as they occurred during the nineteenth century. The table reflects population distribution in 1825, 1870, and 1912, organized by states, according to the federal ordinance of 1870.

The population growth of 1.5 million people that occurred from 1825 to 1870 was primarily centered in the states of Antioquia, Boyacá, Cauca, Cundinamarca, and Santander; a less-significant increase is seen in the states of Bolívar and Tolima; and barely any change occurred in the State of Magdalena. It is worth pointing out that while the demographic changes in Cundinamarca and Boyacá were primarily due to natural increase, and demographic growth in Antioquia, as well as in Bolívar, Cauca, Santander, and Tolima, resulted from internal migration. These movements accelerated during the final decades of the nineteenth century.

The major migratory paths took people from the Andean region of the Eastern mountain range in the center of the country toward the Western mountain

Table 2.2. Population by Provinces, 1789

Province	*Population*	*Province*	*Population*
Tunja	270,813	Mariquita	47,138
Santafé	119,779	Llanos	21,931
Cartagena	119,647	Chocó	15,286
Santa Marta	83,908	Neiva	13,000
Popayán	70,463		
Antioquia	48,604	Total	810,569

Source: Martha Herrera, "Las divisiones político-administrativas del Virreinato de la Nueva Granada a finales del período colonial." *Historia Crítica* (Bogotá, Universidad de Los Andes: 22, Diciembre 2001), 76–104.

Table 2.3. Population in the Nineteenth Century

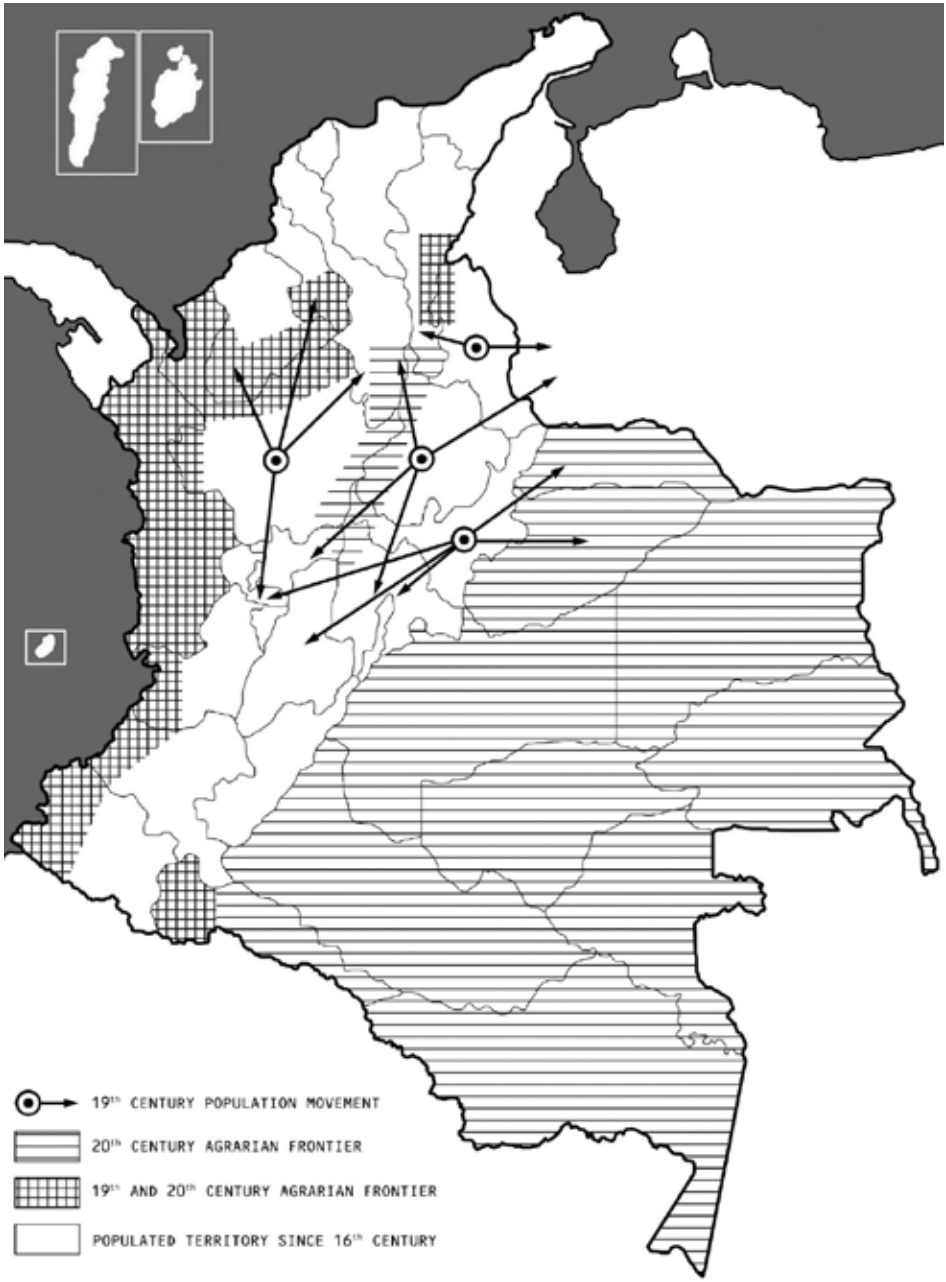
State	*1825*	*1870*	*1912*	*Increase 1825–1870*	*Increase 1870–1912*
Antioquia	104,017	365,974	1,082,135	261,721	716,161
Bolívar	121,663	241,704	535,617	120,041	293,913
Boyacá	208,762	498,541	620,730	289,779	122,189
Cauca	149,778	435,078	865,728	285,300	430,650
Cundinamarca	188,695	413,658	717,714	224,963	304,056
Magdalena	56,320	88,928	202,560	32,608	113,632
Santander	201,207	433,178	604,465	231,971	171,287
Tolima	98,496	230,891	440,617	132,395	209,726
Total	1,129,174	2,707,952	5,069,566	1,578,778	2,361,614

Source: Hermes Tovar Pinzón, *Que nos tengan en cuenta. Colonos, empresarios y aldeas: Colombia 1800–1900* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1995), 28.

range or toward the Eastern mountain range's extreme north to what is today Norte de Santander. Similarly, people moved from the central and eastern mountain ranges toward the savannahs in the interior of the Caribbean coast, what is today the departments of Córdoba and Sucre.

In this way, an increase of more than two million people over the course of forty-two years from 1870 to 1912 distributed people between the Antioquia area on the Central and Western mountain ranges, the Caribbean states, and the state of Cauca. By contrast, Cundinamarca and Tolima had a relative decrease in population growth, and Boyacá and Santander had an absolute loss in population. In other words, the source of populations for the colonizing movements of the late nineteenth century primarily sprang from Boyacá and Santander, where people—pushed from their lands or seeking more space—came to inhabit what is commonly called Greater Antioquia. This region was opened by machete-wielding colonizers who tamed the land and built the thriving city of Medellín, today's capital of Antioquia. These same migrants also came to populate the more temperate regions of Cundinamarca and Norte de Santander, which ultimately produced the first coffee-centered economy in the country through the hacienda system.

The expansion of the agricultural frontier in Colombia during the nineteenth century moved toward more temperate climates, down the mountain ranges. Interestingly, Colombia's western expansion lines up with a similar narrative of U.S. westward expansion in the nineteenth century. In general terms, Colombia's westward movement was undertaken by *colonos*. With their families or in small groups, they moved and cleared lands that they considered national state lands, territory not held privately. The national state supported these endeavors because it was in Colombia's economic interest to integrate large swaths of fertile land into the emerging national project. It was also part


19th CENTURY POPULATION MOVEMENT
20th CENTURY AGRARIAN FRONTIER
19th AND 20th CENTURY AGRARIAN FRONTIER
POPULATED TERRITORY SINCE 16th CENTURY

Map 2.2. Population Movements over Time

and parcel of the political-economic ideals held by the Radical Liberal Party in power during the late nineteenth century. That is, democracy (or so it was assumed) would be favored by connecting democratic development to citizens who held small and medium parcels of land, a sort of "Jeffersonian democracy" in western Colombia, modeled after the North American example.

This ideal, however, was never met. Quickly *colonos* began competing with large landowners, speculators, and jurists who had managed through a variety of strategies to appropriate the newly cleared lands worked by the *colonos*. Their tactics pushed *colonos* to settle newer lands or to become day laborers and tenant farmers on the large haciendas that wealthier, politically influential individuals constructed. Ultimately, then, although the new agricultural frontiers were developed as a result of the movements of thousands of *colonos*, many of these individuals and their families saw opportunities curtailed by the abuses of wealthier groups that managed to gain ownership over large swaths of land, often the very same land cleared and worked by *colonos*. The tensions generated from this process blossomed into a new form of land-based violence in Colombia. The civil wars of the nineteenth century had largely been a series of ideological and strongman (*caudillo*)–led conflicts. By the end of the nineteenth century, landownership and the conditions of work on the land became the two major causes of violent clashes among the Colombian people.

The dynamic of opening the internal agricultural frontier of the country during the nineteenth century was accompanied by an important phenomenon: colonization did not result in the dispersion of the population throughout the territory, but to the contrary, brought people together around towns and cities. These processes of increasing populations around town centers worked as an important organizing principle over territory, which in turn benefited the process of building capacity for the national state. Thus, a great paradox of the nineteenth century emerged: while the country was becoming ever more agricultural, the number of towns that existed in the country increased significantly. These towns brought together a large number of people, and most importantly, it was in these towns where institutions for the emerging republic were situated: the mayor's office, the market, the church, the store, the school, the court, the notary public, the doctor's office, the jail, the café, the inn, the transport terminal, and the telegraph station. These new towns became the new centers of a kind of institution that was inherited from the colonial period and that survived independence: the municipality. In the modern United States, the municipality translates to "county."

The national state made a concerted effort to develop the level of institutionality required for maintaining a clear presence throughout the country's territory. As a result, *cabeceras municipales*, or "heads of municipalities"—towns that were considered the most important in a particular area—became

the critical centers for political organization and socioeconomic integration. It was here where all of the institutions of the emerging state were found. In this sense, the colonizing movements of the nineteenth century, which gave rise to our modern rural peasantry, were accompanied by the systematic foundation of towns, which became the nucleus of municipalities. Therefore, instead of people dispersing haphazardly, towns allowed the agricultural frontiers of Colombia, on the sides of mountains, to be slowly integrated with the national state and connected in various ways to the manners and practices of urban sites. In short, the majority of the population became increasingly rural during the nineteenth century as the agricultural frontiers expanded into the valleys and mountains where *colonos* worked their own lands or lands owned by others, but they never lived so far from a town that they could not travel to it with relative frequency and benefit from, or at least approach, the basic services offered in the town.

AN URBAN COUNTRY: THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1912, of the almost 5.5 million Colombians recorded in the census of that year, 75 percent lived in rural areas. But, as noted, the remaining 25 percent (or about 1.25 million people) ultimately held real control over the territory because they dominated market relations, the institutions of the state, and the other sociocultural dynamics of the nation. For this reason, the municipal leaders became the force that marked the direction, pace of growth, and population settlement during the decades that followed. By the end of the twentieth century, Colombia had transformed into a largely urban country: according to the 2005 census, more than 74 percent of the population lived in metropolitan areas. By 2022, about 80 percent of the Colombian population lived in urban areas.

The demographic dynamics of the twentieth century allowed for a tenfold increase of Colombia's population over the course of the century. Two trends emerged, which were not entirely new, given the dynamics of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, at the same time the population was growing numerically, it was increasingly being pushed from one region to another, expanding the agricultural frontier and generating the foundation of more municipalities. Today, a total of 1,123 municipalities exist. On the other hand, a significant proportion of the expelled or migrating population no longer sought out new lands. Instead, people preferred to migrate to large cities, a movement that gained further momentum due to governmental policies and the unique development of Colombian capitalism.

Concerning the expansion of the agricultural frontier, expulsion of populations favored the growth of agribusiness in rural areas while at the same time

Table 2.4. Distribution of Population by Department: Census, 2018

Department	*Total Population*	*Total in Municipal Capitals*	*Total in Other Municipal Areas*	*Number of Municipalities**
Bogotá D.C.	7.412.566	7.387.400	25.166	1
Antioquia	6.407.102	4.972.941	1.434.161	125
Valle del Cauca	4.475.886	3.809.542	666.344	42
Cundinamarca	2.919.060	2.090.845	828.215	116
Atlántico	2.535.517	2.404.831	130.686	23
Santander	2.184.837	1.655.627	529.210	87
Bolívar	2.070.110	1.549.063	521.047	46
Córdoba	1.784.783	937.319	847.464	30
Nariño	1.630.592	716.592	914.000	64
Norte de Santander	1.491.689	1.173.712	317.977	40
Cauca	1.464.488	545.902	918.586	42
Magdalena	1.341.746	938.320	403.426	30
Tolima	1.330.187	907.506	422.681	47
Boyacá	1.217.376	708.006	509.370	123
Cesar	1.200.574	903.411	297.163	25
Huila	1.100.386	669.697	430.689	37
Meta	1.039.722	795.061	244.661	29
Caldas	998.255	740.865	257.390	27
Risaralda	943.401	736.164	207.237	14
Sucre	904.863	569.089	335.774	26
La Guajira	880.560	410.636	469.924	15
Quindío	539.904	471.910	67.994	12
Chocó	534.826	243.194	291.632	31
Casanare	420.504	295.434	125.070	19
Caquetá	401.849	258.280	143.569	16
Putumayo	348.182	174.539	173.643	13
Arauca	262.174	172.634	89.540	7
Vichada	107.808	25.833	81.975	4
Guaviare	82.767	45.991	36.776	4
Amazonas	76.589	37.047	39.542	2
San Andrés y Providencia	61.280	44.893	16.387	1
Guainía	48.114	20.279	27.835	2
Vaupés	40.797	12.090	28.707	3
Areas not Municipalities				19**
TOTAL COLOMBIA	48.258.494	36.424.653	11.833.841	1123

Source: Colombia: DANE, Census 2018.
* Total of municipalities and areas that are not municipalities, according to DANE y Planeación Nacional.
** Areas not municipalities: 9 in Amazonas; 6 in Guainía; 1 in San Andrés y providencia; 3 in Vaupés.

Map 2.3. Political/Departmental Capitals

poor people were expelled from their homes and forced to find new lands in the limited fertile areas remaining, which were concentrated in the hotter regions of the inter-Andean valleys and especially the rainforests and jungles of the Colombian Amazon and Orinoco basins. In cities, the consolidation of the state and of capitalism, at the same time that it overwhelmingly enriched a few people and dramatically impoverished others, nevertheless permitted a significant increase among the ranks of the middle class, in part because of the development of the service sector and wage labor, which was accompanied by the professionalization of wide segments of these populations.

Today, the principal component of the Colombian nations—the *mestizo* and white population—is primarily urban (in a social and cultural sense), although many members of this population may have ties to rural areas through their parents or grandparents. This fact creates even greater distances between the majority and the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations, which primarily inhabit rural areas of municipal regions that have been most recently colonized. The general preference for the Andean regions and the Caribbean basin by Colombia's population has not changed much over the years, and the cultural differences found in each geographic region continue to mark the most profound characteristic of the Colombian population.

The last table of the chapter, table 2.4, brings together the general statistics of the 2018 census related to the distribution of the population according to departments. It specifies the population that resides in each departmental capital and the number of municipalities that comprise each one. This information offers a quick overview of a Colombia that has emerged during a two-hundred-year period of history.

NOTES

1. The last official Colombian census was conducted in 2018, and the population is given as 48,258,494. By 2022, the population of Colombia, according to UN estimates, is about fifty-two million.
2. This percentage could be as high as 9 percent as of 2016.

Chapter Three

The Dynamics of a Political Community

In 1830, the Republic of Colombia dissolved. Historians remember this republic as Gran Colombia because it brought together under one government the current South American republics of Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela. New republics were born out of the ashes of the civil war fought between 1830 and 1831. The territory that Gran Colombia called Cundinamarca became the Republic of New Granada. Following Simón Bolívar's resignation of the presidency in May 1830 and his death in December of that year, Rafael Urdaneta assumed leadership of New Granada's national military and controlled the government in Bogotá, acting as dictator. Regional *caudillos* opposed not only Urdaneta's dictatorship but also any other attempt to establish a monarchy or to concentrate all political power in one person.

The project to unite northwestern South America into one single republic called Colombia was originally imagined by Francisco Miranda, but it was Simón Bolívar who made the union of New Granada, Quito, and Venezuela a political reality by proposing this measure to the Congress of Angostura in 1819. The Congress approved, but soon thereafter, this extensive and expansive political entity ran into problems. In 1826, the Districts of Venezuela and Quito made it unequivocally clear that the Cúcuta Constitution—and especially the centralist project it proposed for the national state—displeased them. They had a point. All power would be concentrated in Bogotá, and since Bogotá was located in New Granada, both Venezuela and Quito would be beholden to New Granada. Furthermore, they vehemently opposed what seemed to be pro-monarchical ideas in the constitution, especially Bolívar's decision to enact the constitution he created for the recently liberated Bolivia. Federalists squared off against centralists, arguing that necessary and rigorous control over the people and institutions of government was possible only in a federalized system. The centralists, in turn, countered that only

a centralized system that applied laws equally throughout the nation could protect individual liberties. This quickly led to the formation of irreconcilable political factions in Gran Colombia. The situation reached a critical juncture in 1828 when the Ocaña Convention failed to enact the Cúcuta Constitution. It instead paved the way for the secession of Venezuela and Ecuador, both of which separated from the union of Colombia during the first months of 1830, precisely when the convention was supposed to be in session, shaping what is now called the Admirable Constitution. The absence of Venezuela and Quito from this convention, their ability to transform themselves into individual republics, and the resignation of Simón Bolívar from the Colombian presidency meant that the Admirable Constitution was born as a dead letter.

Secession and the civil war created the conditions in the provinces of New Granada for local leaders to gain new political, economic and military powers. This formed the foundation of *caudillo* leadership. The *caudillos*, powerful men with loyal soldiers by their sides, opened political space for themselves by participating in a new legislative convention. Fearing the collapse of the incipient republic, a new constitution was discussed during a meeting that lasted from October 20, 1831, to February 29, 1832, in Bogotá. This new constitution would be decidedly centralist: Presidential elections were held, and Francisco de Paula Santander won, despite the fact that he was living in exile at the time due to his alleged participation in the failed conspiracy to assassinate Bolívar on September 25, 1828. Santander happily sent in his notice of acceptance from exile in New York and was inaugurated into office on October 7, 1832, three days after having returned to Bogotá, the city that had been selected as the new capital for the new Republic of New Granada.

This change opened a new historical era for Colombia. Independence had been fought for and won. The Gran Colombian Republic, no longer facing a threat from the royalist forces, dissolved. February 1832 marks the beginning of 191 years of history lived by the juridical-political entity that is now the Republic of Colombia. After two decades (1810–1830) of political agitation and negotiation of new liberties and the laws that would guarantee them, institutions, potential administrative models, and solid principles had been formulated and a new horizon expanded the limits of what was possible. But these were the initial years, the years during which the state was in the process of being born. The task of making the state function began in 1832. The idealized state had a republican form that not only was difficult to enact but transformed and expanded with the march of time.

This chapter covers the beginning of the collective construction of what we now know as Colombia. Building a state was an arduous and sometimes bloody task. Those who maintained principles of democracy and modern republicanism nevertheless engaged in entrenched and bitter conflicts. The

chapter begins with the history of the Colombian state and its transformation from a liberal state (in the nineteenth-century definition of liberal, that is, guided by European Enlightenment philosophies and precepts) to a state guided by an expanding sense of society and law.

CITIZENSHIP

During the last years of the eighteenth century, news about revolution in the United States and France circulated among inhabitants of New Granada's cities. Creoles (Americans, descendants of Spaniards), *mestizos*, and *Peninsulares* all commented on the events, the rights of man and citizens, the right to elect and be elected, and the sovereignty that would allow a society to make its own laws. Some of these individuals began to think it legitimate to live within a democratic republic—founded through the recognition of civil and political rights of a new kind of political entity: the citizen.

Independence from Spain quickly demonstrated that the organization of new political entities would have to deal with the rights of citizens; this is why the first constitutions, such as that of Tunja in December 1811, or the Constitution of Antioquia from May 1812, included passages such as this: "God has conceded equally to men certain essential, inalienable, natural rights, such as to defend and conserve his life, acquire, enjoy and protect his properties, find and obtain his security and happiness. These rights are reduced to four principal rights: Liberty, legal equality, security, and property."[1] In other words, the essential principles of the French charter of the rights of man, considered the basis for Western civil rights, were already included in the first constitutions of the republics that were forming in the former Audiencia of New Granada. Something similar was happening with political rights, or the right to participate in government. In its twenty-first and twenty-third articles, the same Tunja Constitution of December 1811 stipulated that sovereignty meant the ability to make laws; that no part of the nation could dominate another; that no person without legitimate delegation could exercise authority over others or realize public functions; that all elections should be free; and that each citizen has the right to assemble, in the short or long term, for the purpose of forming laws and the naming of representatives or public functionaries. Thus, confronting the separation from Spain meant creating civil and political liberty through the transformation of subjects into citizens. But what constituted a citizen?

The constitutional developments that created the contemporary Colombian state, which began with the constitution of 1832, provide an answer. First, to be a citizen of the republic, one must necessarily belong to the territory

through birth or naturalization. This principle was included in the charters of 1811 and has not varied since. Second, an individual must, in addition to forming part of a political community that exists within a territory, meet the provisional or permanent requirements to exercise that citizenship. These requirements have changed in important ways over the course of the past two centuries. At first, citizenship was exclusive and formalist and was based on the ideal of homogenizing all the inhabitants according to a single definition of the individual. Now, citizenship is inclusive and accepts diversity as part of belonging to the community—that is, the "Estado Social de Derecho."[2]

The constitution issued in 1832 established rules for citizenship. Citizens were men who were over twenty-one years of age, married, who possessed properties with a minimum value of three hundred pesos or an annual income of at least 150 pesos that did not come from domestic service or day labor, and who knew how to read and write (although this requirement was deferred to 1840). The constitution of 1843 qualified and simplified these requirements, stating that citizenship was for males over twenty-one years of age who paid taxes on properties or income as required in the constitution of 1832 (again, the literacy requirement was deferred, this time until 1850). The constitution of 1853, however, significantly lowered the requirements for citizenship by dropping property and income requirements; thus, in 1853, an individual male had to be at least twenty-one years of age and married (or married at one point) in order to be considered a citizen.

The provincial legislature of the town of Vélez, north of the capital city, went further still and voted to extend suffrage to women, adding that women be duly represented along with men in local electoral boards to ensure that their participation was truly effective. The Supreme Court nullified this law, arguing that the states did not have the right to grant more political rights than the rest of the nation. The federal constitution of 1858 maintained universal male suffrage for those over twenty-one years and married, as did the federal constitution of 1863. But the latter ensured that the constitutions of the states within the union should all guarantee the principles of popular elective, representative government that alternates and that is responsible, leaving it up to each state to decide the requirements for citizenship. Finally, in 1886, the last of the constitutions of the nineteenth century established that "citizens are those Colombian males older than twenty-one years who have a profession, art, or office, or hold legal employment or another form of legitimate and known source of subsistence."[3]

Fifty years later, in 1936, the Colombian Congress reformed the constitution of 1886. Beginning in that year, citizenship belonged to men who were twenty-one years or older. All other requirements were stricken. This reform also opened a viable space for political participation by women in public

office: it determined, after reiterating that the condition of valid citizenship was required to elect, or to be elected, that "the Colombian woman who was of age may execute public office, even if [such work] connotes authority or jurisdiction."[4] In other words, women could be appointed to positions of public authority—even to positions that required executive decision making. Women, with this reform, began attending university and, to some degree, modernity began to emerge for women in Colombia. A few years later, in 1945, another reform of the constitution eliminated the reference to males in the definition of citizenship, leaving citizenship open for any Colombian over twenty-one years of age. However, the following article of the same reform document expressly limited its exercise to men with respect to the right to elect or to be elected. A fundamental change finally occurred in 1957: women were granted the right to vote by the national state, and women now held the same political rights as men. In 1975, the constitution was reformed yet again in order to reduce the voting age to eighteen. Finally, the constitution of 1991, which is the governing constitution of Colombia today, considers questions of citizenship but only in terms of when it may be lost or suspended, and maintains legal age at eighteen years of age. In this sense, the formal characteristics of citizenship have been universalized to the maximum degree. The one unchanging characteristic is that citizenship is still considered the single most important requirement needed to vote, to be elected, and to hold public offices.

There is a new aspect to the 1991 charter, however. This constitution gives an exhaustive list of the rights and responsibilities of the Colombian citizen. Formal citizenship, which had implied that all people, men or women, indigenous or Afro-Colombian, had to be homogeneous in terms of citizenship, now allows for citizenship based on cultural or ethnic distinction and heterogeneity. The 1886 constitution—which guided the nation for 106 years—conferred citizenship based on cultural connection to Spain in addition to being white, male, and Catholic.

RIGHTS

Although the Colombian state's capacity is still limited in its ability to guarantee all citizens the benefits of the rights that the current social contract recognizes and grants, the situation today, after almost two centuries of republican life, has obviously evolved since 1832. Civil and political rights have expanded over time, which is important, but they are not as definitive as those of today's charter in establishing social, economic, cultural, and environmental rights together with the institutional infrastructure to guarantee them. This was the fruit of political rebellions, cultural resistance, and

ideological and partisan battles—in short, clear social conflicts and fratricidal wars that have been part of the contemporary history of Colombia. The formal democracy that was inaugurated during the first decades of the nineteenth century now consists of a political system that understands the individual as a social and cultural being with the inalienable right to be distinctive—culturally, ethnically, racially, religiously, sexually, and so on.

From the basic list of civil rights, taken from the French charter of 1789, and consigned in the first constitutions, independence allowed for the contentious battling for the inclusion of a system of political rights. In this sense, the history of democracy in Colombia forms part of an initial moment, one whereby it was understood that for an individual to claim rights, such rights had to be guaranteed via political sovereignty. For this reason, it is not surprising that as early as April 1811, the Constitution of Cundinamarca, while maintaining the monarchy as the formal system of government, limited the monarchy's exercise of power to a charter of laws and the sovereignty of the people. Similarly, the sixteen articles of the 1811 constitution's Title XII gave legitimacy to the following rights of man and citizen: equality, legal liberty, security, and property. It also made the right to free expression explicit and prohibited taxation without representation or without an explanation of how such taxes would benefit public use. Furthermore, men and citizens could not be called to trial, stand accused, or imprisoned except through formal processes prescribed by law. Finally, citizens would participate in the formulation of laws and in the naming of representatives. This last right, that is, the right to participate directly by being elected or indirectly through the right to elect, supports popular sovereignty.

Subsequent constitutions allowed for little change in the conception of rights. Expanding these rights was limited by two factors that were not easily transformed. The first factor was related to the restrictions on citizenship explained above. These restrictions limited political rights to a small portion of society. The second factor was the de facto distance that existed between the enjoyment of political rights and the enjoyment of civil rights. Take, for instance, private property. Private property was equally guaranteed for whites, indigenous people, and blacks once the abolition of slavery occurred in 1851. This right to property grew through a rapid dismantling of *mayorazgos*,[5] the confiscation of properties held in mortmain, the commissioning of property surveys, and other inheritances from the colonial regime, including the largely successful attempts at abolishing indigenous *resguardos*. During most of the nineteenth century, the right to be elected, to elect, and to carry out public office was the exclusive domain of wealthy, property-owning men twenty-one years old or older. This situation helps explain the meaning and importance of the social struggles that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The main struggle centered on the extent to which political rights could be expanded, given the economic advantages the wealthier classes enjoyed by restricting suffrage. Guilds, ethnic organizations, women's groups, unions, leftist democratic organizations, revolutionary groups—in short, individuals and collectivities with progressive agendas—have at different times pushed, through different forms of struggle, to expand the democratic nature of civil and political rights of Colombians. These struggles have meant the transformation from equality and liberty under the law, proclaimed and defended in 1811, to social equity as enunciated in the new constitution of 1991.

A new category of rights took shape in the world during the second half of the twentieth century: social rights. These were introduced into Colombia through the above-mentioned social groups. Thus, the debate over the need to expand the participative base of the Colombian state occurred when ethnic, women's, and political opposition and armed groups led a strong resistance against a bipartisan structure that had held power since the middle of the nineteenth century. This push for greater sociopolitical inclusion in Colombia gained momentum when the student movement of the Seventh Ballot, organized in the last days of 1989 and beginning of 1990 as a result of the murder of three opposition candidates to the presidency, reinforced the need for a change to the constitution. The constitution of 1991 was born out of that movement, opening space for a renewed social pact that would establish new bases for rights of all Colombian citizens.

The 1991 constitution established Colombia as a social state of rights. Title II of the document organizes the fundamental rights of Colombians, which begin with the defense of life and the prohibition of the death penalty. The second chapter brings together social, economic, and cultural rights. The third brings together rights associated with the environment and collective rights to use of the environment. The fourth establishes how all these rights will be protected and applied. And, finally, the fifth chapter determines the duties and obligations of Colombians. Debates about the applicability of these rights have generated actions such as the right to "*tutela*,"[6] the right to petition, and the right to sue; judges and public functionaries must oversee these rights under penalty of prevarication. In short, this new system established a seemingly infinite horizon of possibilities for Colombians and set social equity as the primary objective of the national state.

THE DEMOCRATIC MODEL AND POLITICS

Since 1810, the possibility of setting up a monarchy in Colombia has never been seriously contemplated, although on some occasions the idea was

proposed. In 1811, the Constitution of Cundinamarca did so, and then, in the late 1820s, a faction that opposed the Cúcuta Constitution proposed a monarchy as an alternate form of government. Nonetheless, the breakup of Gran Colombia indicated that Colombia would emerge as a democratic representative republic. With some regularity, however, leaders entertained proposals to transform the government into a parliamentary system, which quickly were abandoned because they did not fit with the presidential tradition that had taken root in the nation. What was argued over, and several times with force of arms, was the centralist versus federalist character of the nation's organization and the relative balance of power between branches of government. In general terms, the country had seen centralism as the predominating form of organization, which consequently produced an imbalance in favor of the executive power.

Debates over the strength of centralism in the nation began very early in the republic's history. After the dissolution of Colombia, the Republic of New Granada that took its place in 1832 was centralist, favoring a strong executive power. This tendency continued well into 1853, when the constitution of that year opened the way for the autonomous organization of the provinces, which in turn allowed for a short yet monumental epoch in nineteenth-century history. From 1854 to 1857, the corporative and baroque traditions of the colonial period were well on their way to being systematically dismantled, and during these years, the centralized state was also disassembled. New norms were adopted at this time, including legalization of divorce, a secular state separate from the Catholic Church, direct taxation, and other measures that highlighted the importance of the individual before the state. Some of these changes were short lived. The constitution of 1858 tried to rein in the extremes that resulted, with some success. It was a federalist constitution that sought to recover political space for centralism and executive power. However, the competing forces of the 1853 and 1858 constitutions provoked a visceral civil war that, in turn, generated a new constitution in 1863, which was equally federalist and followed the North American model of 1787; the constitution took cues from positions elaborated by George Washington, John Adams, and the Federalist Party—all favoring more control over the associated states by a central national power.

The centralist, presidentialist system returned more quickly than expected. The brief civil war of 1885 ushered in the new constitution of 1886, which returned Colombia to a centralist state with a strong executive power. Additional civil wars broke out in 1895 and from 1899 to 1902, as the centralist system was still contested by a significant portion of the population. This second conflict was the most destructive of the nineteenth century and is remembered as the War of a Thousand Days. No clear winners emerged,

but the war did set the stage for the first major reform of the constitution in 1910. This reform moderated the centralist excesses of the 1886 charter and allowed for a relatively long period of political peace that lasted until the 1930s. Nevertheless, the reform of 1910 did not manage to successfully resolve the deepening party conflicts that had channeled not only political interests but also political violence. Both liberals and conservatives battled to control the executive branch, as well as related institutions of the state, to the exclusion of the other. Instead of opening a space for debate, where decisions could be made through congressional discussions of ideas and programs, or allowing state bureaucracy to be managed by technocrats and specialists, both parties sought a monopoly over all public offices. This assured that key decisions that had significant consequences for the future were made in ways that favored political party clientelism and guaranteed party loyalty. Battles moved from the field to the ballot box and, through this channel, to public administration at the precise moment when the governmental bureaucracy was expanding in size and complexity, given the increasing modernization of the country.

The lesson of Colombia's nineteenth century was clear: presidentialism/centralism created fertile ground whereby party-led management of the state became the factor that contributed most directly to chronic violence. A monopoly of state offices by one or the other political party was viewed as the most efficacious manner of operating government, and such monopoly was typically enforced through violence. Triumphs at the ballot box granted political power to one party to the exclusion of the other. The party out of power often determined that violence was the only way to overturn such a situation of exclusion. Although formal civil wars disappeared in the twentieth century, political party violence remained one of the basic characteristics of the Colombian political model; violence was the manner through which control over the Colombian state was ensured.

In this sense, the twentieth century witnessed the continuity of centralism and presidentialism as the consequence of political party struggles over control. This, in turn, led to a crisis of violence at midcentury and eventually to what is remembered as the National Front. The National Front was an elite-led agreement among leaders of the Liberal and Conservative Parties to alternate their hold on the presidency with calculated parity in each and every possible public office. This regime lasted from 1958 until 1974, and in some ways it lasted into 1986, when the Liberal president, Virgilio Barco, decided to return to the government of one-party rule, which represented the apex of presidentialism for the country. The bipartisan agreement, by obliging each party to alternate its hold on the presidency, managed to solve one problem: it dramatically slowed political violence that not only bloodied the country

from 1930 to 1958 but also had subjected the nation's institutions to a profound crisis. For example, Colombia's only military dictatorship (1953–1957) occurred during this period. Similarly, the parity in public offices solved part of the bipartisan dispute but significantly debilitated the party base ideologically. Thus, clientelism became the principal mechanism through which party loyalty was rewarded. Although there were some earlier attempts to build a state around modern technocratic principles, the reform of 1958—the peace ushered in by the National Front—accelerated this trend. Nevertheless, the consequences of this transformation and of the so-called peace generated profound impacts on the society and political culture of Colombians. Politics as an exercise of citizenship was stripped of its virtue, instead favoring the technocrat and punishing the career politician. At the same time, new, dangerous actors exploded onto the national political scene: the guerilla fighter, the drug trafficker, the paramilitary, and the corrupt public official. A society that was becoming ever more urbanized increasingly grew politically apathetic, a phenomenon that was made evident by the significant abstention that has characterized all elections since the implementation of the Frente Nacional in 1958.

Unfortunately, the model of state imposed upon Colombia after the National Front coalition government up until the constitution of 1991 was unable to respond to challenges posed by the radical transformations of Colombian society and culture. Nor could it expand the bases of political participation within the state. One solution was offered with the constitutional reform of 1986, which expanded political participation and democracy via direct, popular election of governors and mayors and through overall administrative decentralization. Direct elections of regional and local government officials livened up political activity and, at least in the larger cities, helped reinvigorate the rise of third parties and even civic candidacies. Nevertheless, many regions and population centers could not completely eliminate cronyism or political clientelism. And once the leadership of the major parties lost control over the electoral process, the path was clear for other actors to enter the state apparatus, primarily drug traffickers and paramilitaries. Furthermore, decentralization has not led to more regional autonomy regarding decision-making as the central state, that is, the executive branch, continues dictating what should be done at the local level.

The constitution of 1991 sought to create a new model for the state. This is what the moment demanded: a guerilla movement had radicalized due to the failure of the peace talks at the end of the 1980s and especially due to the systematic assassination of thousands of members of the Unión Patriótica, a leftist political party founded by the insurgent group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and the Colombian Communist Party that had

successfully won public office in many municipalities throughout the country. Moreover, paramilitary groups were organizing at this time, and their agendas went beyond controlling local processes and affairs; they became national political actors with agendas of their own. Drug cartels also gained increasing political power, having won seats in Congress and influence among businesspeople, politicians, and government officials. The economic crisis of the 1980s and innumerable other problems forced a reconsideration of the Colombian state model.

Changes came swiftly; in less than a year a new constitution was created. It proposed as a formula for the state a social state of rights and a renewed relationship among the branches of government from that of the past. The excesses of presidentialism were curtailed by strengthening the legislative branch and expanding the area of action in which the high courts of the judicial branch could act. The results have been limited, but nevertheless, what it means to govern Colombia today is beginning to change significantly from what it meant in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

GOVERNMENT

A significant paradox exists in the history of the Colombian state: at the same time that centralism and presidentialism have generated chronic violence due to their combined exclusionary character, which still has not been solved by the current state model, they have allowed for significant achievements in the modernization of the country and improvements in the quality of life of its inhabitants. Of course, it is impossible to state that poverty, which is the result of social, economic, and even political inequalities and discrimination, has been eradicated. Nevertheless, the challenges that have defined the work of governing over the course of time, as a product of ideological and cultural changes and of pressures that have emerged out of social struggles, indicate that today the nation is moving forward with the consolidation of a social state of rights.

From early on, Colombia has defined what it means to govern: since the constitution of 1832, which evidenced clear continuities with the first charters approved in 1811, the Colombian state has dictated that supreme power would be divided among the separate legislative, executive, and judicial branches. The object of governing is to protect liberty, security, property, and equality among a nation's inhabitants. Additionally, from its beginnings in 1832 until 1991, Colombia has dictated that the government is obliged to protect its inhabitants in their practice of the Roman Catholic religion. The changes in this conception of the state have been few but significant: on the

one hand, the 1991 constitution considered the need for administrative decentralization; on the other hand, the 1991 constitutional assembly had to decide on the types of issues that needed government direction and consequently made decisions concerning the adequate management and balance of modern measures of public administration. These factors, taken together, allow for a clearer understanding of the particularities of the history of the Colombian state.

The first factor that has shaped the Colombian government is the extent of administrative decentralization. The origins of the issue lie in the tension that municipal governance generates in the political lives of Colombians because of the diversity of Colombia's regions. The regions vary according to the characteristics of the national territory, the ways in which a particular region was populated, and the chronic imposition of centralized government and institutions. The constitutions of 1832 and 1843 imposed a change toward centralism, since all local authorities could be elected only through the direct intervention of the central power. For example, in the constitution of 1843, the governor of a province was named directly by the president, who could recall the governor at any time—this ensured immediate political power for the executive in the provinces. The nine states that finally gave shape to the Granadine Confederation (1858–1863) and to the United States of Colombia (1863–1886) offered an intermediate solution for governance between the municipality and the central state. Authority at this time was found in a sort of permanent tension between the central and federal levels, and this tension prevented the municipality from actually governing. The conditions of the federal conception nevertheless established that the central government would govern only in those matters that were expressly delegated by federal governments. For this reason, the tendency of states to govern themselves autonomously and the conflicts that emerged among states when regional political offices were controlled by the opposing party or faction weakened government and, in general, the federal state.

With the constitution of 1886, the state was centralized, and the government was left in the hands of only one political party. The government returned to an exclusive, centralized executive power with agents throughout the country, once again causing an unequal distribution of power among the branches of government in favor of the president, his ministers, the governors, and mayors. These were the political figures that most dominated the political scene for the following century. This situation did not change until the constitutional reform of 1986, the year in which popular elections of governors and mayors were approved, and in this way, presidential power and that of the coalition that brought him to office was tempered.

Notwithstanding the resultant revival of political participation at the regional and local levels, especially in urban areas, caused by this transformation, the reform did not achieve a significant expansion of the powers of these new public officials. The Colombian government was still clearly defined by centralism. After two hundred years and even taking into account changes to the social pact, in Colombia the regional and local levels of government remain limited in their capacity to make fundamental administrative decisions. These decisions are primarily made at the highest levels of central government.

Second, the matters of government have varied as society has grown in complexity over the course of centuries. In spite of the different ideas concerning who should govern during the nineteenth century, the democracy that predominated was maintained without any major changes concerning its liberal conception—that is, a state composed of individual citizens whose rights needed to be guaranteed. In this sense, the nineteenth-century state did not intervene in matters of liberty and equality before the law, nor did it intervene to limit private property. The world economic crisis that occurred in the 1930s, which forced a profound transformation in liberal democracies, equally affected the Colombian state and challenged the common conception of the purpose of government. The interventionist state took shape, and in this way it limited, through predetermined rules, the rights to property, extending the concept of equality beyond that of the law by introducing the consideration of social well-being. Regarding respect for liberty, which could be restricted as stipulated by the constitution of 1886, the capacities of government were expanded in terms of their provisional ability to place limits on liberty. The crises of the 1930s and the emergence of new social actors of the late twentieth century, which eventually led to the constitution of 1991, forced the most important governmental change that has occurred in the past two centuries. The social state of rights means governing officials must enforce both equity and society's well-being.

The executive power, during the nineteenth century, centralized or federated, understood that its circumscribed principal tasks were to control political and military order within the state and international relations (both political and commercial) and to expand and consolidate the national treasury. These matters gave shape to the "secretariats of the office," referred to as such until the constitution of 1886 regularized the naming of ministries created up until that time. Government, in 1819 (now Interior); Foreign Relations, 1821; Taxation, 1863 (today Taxation and Public Credit); War, 1821 (today National Defense); Public Education, 1880 (today National Education); Treasury, 1863 (merged with Taxation in 1923); and Development, 1880 (dissolved in

1905). Shortly thereafter the Ministry of Justice was created, initially in 1890 but suspended in 1894 only to be reestablished in 1945 (today as the Ministry of Justice and Law). In 1905 Public Works was established (today it is called Transportation). In 1913 the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce (today Agriculture and Rural Development) was organized, and in 1923 the Ministry of Mail and Telegraphs (today Information Technologies and Communications) was established.

An important governmental reform of 1936 created a welfare state—modeled after, to some degree, the United States under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's government reform during the 1930s; thus, in Colombia the Ministry of Labor, Hygiene, and Social Provision (today Labor) was created in 1936. In 1940 the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum (today Mines and Energy) was established, and in 1946 the Ministry of Labor was reorganized and a new Health Ministry grew out of it and in 1953 this became the Ministry of Public Health which is today called Health and Social Protection. Several decades passed before any new ministries were created. Not until 1991 did the External Commerce Ministry (today Commerce, Industry, and Tourism) emerge. The Environment Ministry was formed in 1993—today it is called Environment and Sustainable Development). In 1997, the Ministry of Culture was created. In 2011, Housing, City, and Territory was created; in 2019 a Ministry of Sports and in 2020, Science, Technology, and Innovation. The most recent ministry, approved in December 2022 and inaugurated at the beginning of 2023 is called the Ministry of Equality and Equity.

These developments, since the government's beginning in 1832, have been accompanied by activities directly guided and enforced by the executive power, according to the needs of each particular historic moment. For example, these ministries guided the development of manufacturing industries; also, state lands were conceded, immigrants of European origin were courted, railroads and roads were built, normal/teaching schools were established, school textbooks were produced, and museums/libraries were opened. In short, everything from vaccinations and hospitals to agribusinesses and telecommunications, including radio and television, were aspects of the many changes managed by successive Colombian government administrations to ensure the progress of the nation.

Third, and finally, the capacity to *assure* the future of the governed via the management of modern public administration tools took on a constitutional demeanor. Thus, the introduction of planning in government was initiated with the state reform of 1936. The Soviet state planning of the 1920s inspired this change, as did the need to intervene effectively in individual liberties to bring welfare solutions to the crises of the 1930s. This kind of intervention

developed into an alternative political formula to the communist system proposed and supported by the Communist Party of Colombia, the PCC—a system never adopted in Colombia.

Planning became a key role of government and continues to be today. The constitutional reform of 1958 permanently established planning in Colombia. Colombian law requires departments and municipalities to have a planning institution. Furthermore, the interventionist state made it possible for the executive branch to develop many public entities, such as the Superintendencies of Commerce and Finance, among others; the Administrative Departments of Security (DAS—closed in 2011), Public Function (DAFP), and Statistics (DANE), among others; and Industrial and Commercial Works of the State (Ecopetrol, the state-run oil company, for example). Taken in their totality, these public entities have allowed the government to complete its tasks more efficiently but also to intervene directly in the development of the country.

THE FORMATION OF LAW

Congress, comprising the Senate and the House of Representatives, has always served as the institution charged with forming the laws of the Colombian Republic. Its function, with a few notable exceptions, has been constant in Colombian history. During the First Republic, legislative bodies were organized. During Gran Colombia, Congress was in session between 1823 and 1828 and ceased to exist when Simón Bolívar decided to close Congress so that he could create the political circumstances for a new constitution. From 1832 to 1905, Congress functioned with only occasional short closures caused by civil wars or conflicts between factions within each party—for example, the *golpe de estado* carried out by José María Melo between April and December 1854—but the most prolonged occurred during the civil war of 1860 to 1862 and the War of a Thousand Days from 1899 to 1902. From 1904 to 1909, President Rafael Reyes dissolved Congress and imposed a national assembly. Congress was not closed again until 1949, when by decree President Mariano Ospina Pérez did so at a time when rural and urban violence grew dramatically. Congress remained closed until the fall of the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1957 and through the end of the transition regime known as the Military Government on July 20, 1958. The most recent closure, which in effect was not caused by a government decision but by the creation of the Constitutional Assembly, which created the new constitution of 1991, occurred between 1990 and 1991.

The relatively consistent activity of this institution has been one of its defining characteristics. Nevertheless, what has in reality marked its nature

within Colombia has been executive officials' preference for a *weak Congress*. This has allowed the executive power to carry out legislative initiatives in the country, either because many of the law projects discussed in Congress have been developed in the offices of the different ministries or because the constitution of 1886 allowed the president to govern by decree. Often, presidents would abuse this clause of exception and make it the rule. The constitution of 1991 prohibited these excesses and has tried to place the country under the dictates of a strong Congress. The difficulty in activating a strong Congress is explained by looking to the weakness of the Colombian political parties vis-à-vis the executive power: clientelism has not completely disappeared as a mechanism of political negotiation and control by the opposition in the country. Also, unfortunately, the parties continue to approach politics in a manner that places a high value on coercive customs associated with political *caudillos*.

The formation of laws in Colombia has followed the dictates of a government led by a strong executive power. A weak Congress has been maintained. Given that Congress makes laws and is the body charged with overseeing the approval of laws based on majorities in Congress, the executive has limited the capacity of the legislative branch to solve some of its most entrenched vices by making it difficult for Congress to enact a transformation of itself. One can argue, however, that the permanence of a weak Congress gives the appearance of a kind of de facto executive dictatorship. However, Colombia has managed—with major difficulties—to avoid the emergence of actual dictatorships, except during one period in the 1950s. The exercise of resistance has been, therefore, positive for the health of the state, but the cost in terms of human lives and social instability has been enormously high for Colombian society.

NOTES

1. "Constitución de la República de Tunja, 1811," in Manuel Antonio Pombo and José Joaquín Guerra, *Constituciones de Colombia*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1951), 246.

2. This term refers to the fact that the 1991 constitution insists that the Colombian state is organized along a complex charter of human rights—in the contemporary sense and usage of the term. Roughly, the term translates as "Social State of Rights."

3. "Constitución de 1886, artículo 15," *Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes*, www.cervantesvirtual.com. Accessed June 3, 2011.

4. "Acto legislativo No. 1, agosto 5, 1936," in "Reformas de la Constitución de 1886." *Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes*.

5. This Spanish colonial system, concerned with holding large Spanish-controlled territories intact, forbade any person except the eldest son from inheriting property.

6. *Tutela* comes from the Spanish verb *tutelar*, which gives guardianship over something or someone. The 1991 constitution forced government officials to respond to individuals who wished to use the law to protect their guaranteed rights.

Chapter Four

The Cadence of Unity

Over a period of two hundred years, the country we now call the Republic of Colombia underwent several name changes. In 1819, the Republic of Colombia (unofficially called Gran Colombia by scholars) encompassed present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador. By 1830, Venezuela and Ecuador seceded, and the Republic of New Granada that emerged included today's Panama and Colombia. New Granada's name changed in 1858 to the Granadine Confederation, a name that was replaced in 1863 by the United States of Colombia. Not until 1886 did the name Republic of Colombia return, though it referred to a territorial entity significantly different from the Republic of Colombia of 1819. As the multiple name and territorial changes suggest, the nation (a unifying culture) that would give rise to the state (institutions) did not exist when the state first formed. Even today a "Colombian nation" is difficult to identify. What emerges out of the depths of Colombia's republican history is a state that constructed the "nation." By actively producing both governmental and cultural institutions over its territory, Colombia would gain stability and, over time, would consolidate into a unified nation.

The changes in name were not accidental. As we have seen in previous chapters, the nineteenth century may be characterized by the search for a state model that would accommodate itself to what elites understood as best for their interests and, by extension, those of the country. Nevertheless, powerful elite power brokers were regionalized. The particular spatial distribution of elites into regions explains in part why the name of the country changed so often; regional elites fought one another in various civil wars. The history of these conflicts reveals the kinds of political and social tensions that, once resolved, allowed the Colombian state to unify its "parts." Those parts were vastly different from one another and for centuries had developed unique modes of existence and ways of using space. They were separate nations.

This chapter studies the principal dynamics that facilitated the construction of a viable state in terms of its social and territorial control. It may be said that the nineteenth century inaugurated the kinds of political and cultural dynamics that began to change the centrifugal tendency of the Colombian social order. This tendency was most pronounced in the dispute among the different Colombian federalisms that were obliterated by the triumph of centralism in the late 1800s. Once this inclination toward dispersion was thus resolved, the twentieth century saw the excesses of regional autonomy solved through an extremely centralist and presidentialist system that grew more moderate with time. In this context a contradiction needed to be resolved: the problem of how to consolidate a strong state without excluding wide social sectors from representation. Mechanisms had to be developed that would help Colombians understand their place within the social and cultural body politic. The most difficult challenge would be to overcome the geographic and cultural barriers that separated the old provinces. Foremost, substantial improvements in communications were needed. Trade and agricultural production could then expand into the intermediate zones, or the frontier areas located at lower altitudes along the three mountain ranges, which were sparsely populated and deemed available for colonization and economic development. Increased urbanization would then allow for the installation of ample midlevel professional sectors that could employ workers and laborers who shared common notions of citizenship and future aspirations—thereby creating authentic mechanisms of social ascent.

The primary forces that helped forge national unity are varied. The two traditional political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives, have been crucial unifying forces. Additional mechanisms of national unity include Roman Catholicism as a common religion and Spanish as the national language. Other important unifying factors include the establishment of the army and a national currency.

THE PARTIES AND THE NATION

Differences among political parties, which focused on monopolizing the state and its institutions, were the primary cause of the political violence unleashed on the country throughout its republican history. This was considered in detail in the previous chapter. The purpose of studying political parties here offers a more nuanced understanding of the political party system in Colombia during the nineteenth century, critical to the development, and permanence, of the Colombian state over time.

The traditional political parties were ultimately a key unifying factor in the construction of a nation. The reason stems not from the ideological principles

laid out by one or another party, which shaped each party and remained consistent for decades. Rather, it was the social composition of the parties and their distribution throughout the territory that generated a measure of unity and stability. In this sense, Liberals and Conservatives developed multiclass, regional political organizations.

Both parties emerged in the mid-nineteenth century; they offered ideological positions for the conflicts that raged at that time, particularly regarding the definition of a state that would attempt to control a complex society. Toward the end of the 1840s a kind of solution and cause for violent confrontation emerged. In 1848, as tensions rose with the elections that were to be celebrated in 1849, the initial political platforms of the two parties were first published. Over the course of the next 130 years, these were the only two political parties in Colombia with the capacity to control the entire state and its institutions.

Before examining the trajectory of the two parties, a clarification is in order. This concerns the argument that the parties were founded within the context of Bolivarianism and Santanderism of the Gran Colombia epoch. For the leaders of the mid-nineteenth century, it was clear that there was no reason to ransack the pages of history to find origins for their political parties in the early republic. All debate and ideological differences were actually rooted in a basic agreement over which there was no dispute at all: the republic, no matter its formal organization, would be popular and representative and would share a balance of power among its branches of government. Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, one of the founders of the Conservative Party, stated it this way in an article published in 1850: "Today in New Granada there are no Bolivarians nor royalists. . . . Today there is no discussion on whether or not New Granada should be united or separated from Spain; whether the government should be a monarchy or a republic. Similarly, there can be no discussion over whether or not the states that form Colombia should separate. These questions have been decided, and these decisions are consummated facts, and there is no turning back."[1]

These words demonstrate the ways in which emerging party leaders confronted what had been perceived as a necessary reform of the state of New Granada. This reform was brought about as a result of the decentralizing changes the *caudillo* leader Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera put into effect during his first presidential administration (1845–1849). Ezequiel Rojas published the text that now is recognized as the first program of the Liberal Party in the newspaper *El Aviso* on July 16, 1848. In the text's final section, Rojas states that the Liberal Party wants a government that is organized for the benefit of the governed; it wants a Republic, a truly representative system; an independent congress, an executive power that can only do what the

law permits; positive responsibility, and for that, independent tribunals, good laws, an eminently national and American policy emanating from the Executive Power, impartial justice for all, that the actions of the State have no other consideration other than the public good, and it wants all this so that those who obey do not become the slaves of those who govern; this way there will be true liberty; we will liberate ourselves from a theocratic government, and assure the people that they are secure in their homes and in their property, and that these guarantees are not false promises.[2]

Less than three months later, on October 4, 1848, the newspaper *La Civilización* published an article by Mariano Ospina Rodríguez and José Eusebio Caro titled, "Conservative Program of 1849," which today is recognized as the first document of that party because it details the eight principles that guided Conservatives into the future:

> First, constitutional order against a dictatorship; second, law will triumph over the power of direct action; third, the morality of Christianity and its civilizing doctrines against the immorality of corrupting doctrines of materialism and atheism; fourth, rational liberty in all of its applications against despotism, albeit monarchical, demagogic or literary; fifth, legal equality against aristocratic, university, or other privilege; sixth, the real and effective tolerance against exclusivism and persecution, whether it be a Catholic against the protestant or the deist, or the atheist against the Jesuit or friar, etc.; seventh, property [will be protected] against theft and usurpations executed by communists . . . or anyone else; eighth, security against the arbitrary actions of any kind; Civilization, in short, against barbarism.

The program ends by clarifying that "to be or to have been an enemy of Santander, of Azuero, or López does not mean one is Conservative."[3]

These parties quickly became national. This is precisely the point that must be emphasized. One reason both parties became national political parties is that both were born in Bogotá. Though it is true that native sons, or *caudillos*, led regional autonomies, it is also true that in order to triumph nationally, these regional leaders had to take Bogotá politically. Affiliating oneself with a particular party was a kind of personal guarantee, as other party members in other regions could support the cause and help block opponents from using government mechanisms against a candidate and his allies.

Additionally, political party systems offered continuity. Systems of authority based on kinship and labor, consolidated during the colonial period via patriarchal and corporative social organization, were firmly rooted in the country. From father to son and from patron to client (worker), these hierarchical relationships continued. One's choice of political party affiliation often merged with those in one's kinship and labor sphere. Transgression

could have serious repercussions on family relationships and on the loyalties that emerged out of the principle of obedience to one's patron. Such inherited party loyalties adapted as a result of expanding family relationships or modernizing labor relations that followed the migrations of populations. Moreover, political parties easily transitioned into new territories and paralleled the demographic growth of the country.

The electoral system, either through secret universal ballot or through "indirect" (that is, nonuniversal) elections, facilitated the maintenance and growth of the parties in the regions. As ideological or regional interests clashed within the same party, internal fissures would occur, but rarely would a new political party emerge. Both parties managed to exert a level of control over electoral machinery and did so through their ability to name government functionaries to posts. This kind of patronage shaped the major pathway through which people accessed political office and administrative positions at all levels of the public sector. Thus the people could receive benefits from the state, but only through their ties to a recognized political party. Political party leaders managed to impose a monopoly on the bureaucracy of the public sector. This loyalty to one or another party allowed a person access to the state mechanisms that prompted development, justice, or protection from adversaries. Finally, as the state and the political parties increasingly intertwined, a dynamic of growth and consolidation occurred such that neither one could be distinguished completely from the other.

This last aspect conditioned one of the problems that helps explain, in part, the reasons for the chronic weakness of the Colombian state. The act of governing was subject to the capacity of one party to control the state's apparatus not only in the center but also in each region of the country. Regional control was never completely possible since partisan control varied from region to region and even from province to province within a region. In other words, to control the central state and to monopolize its principal institutions were no guarantee of obedience throughout the territory. If one party's ability to exert control were cut off, it would resort to armed resistance and political violence. In this way, the same mechanisms that had permitted the parties to extend their reach nationally, generating either Liberal Colombians or Conservative Colombians, no matter their place of residence or provincial culture, strengthened the state but also, paradoxically, divided it. Party rule became government rule, and minimal separation of political affiliation from the exercise of public administration persisted.

Colombian nation building is therefore tied to political partisanship. Having either a Liberal or Conservative political affiliation formed an essential part of what it meant to be Colombian, at least until the National Front years. It is important to note, however, that within these affiliations there was room for

nuance, even differences, but rarely were these expressed outside of or independent from either one of the two parties. The reasons for differing opinions within either party varied, but they almost always developed as conflicts of opinion between the radical members of a party versus those who held more moderate views. The former steadfastly held onto doctrine, while the latter preferred the opportunities presented by holding a more politically pragmatic position, especially so that capitalism and bourgeois life could advance. Similarly, when conflict arose between parties and reached such extremes as to threaten the very viability of the state, the more moderate members of each party tended to negotiate, creating interparty agreements that served as escape valves for potentially explosive pressure. The first such negotiation occurred in 1854 as a result of the violent reaction by the artisan guilds against the increasing individualization imposed as part of the requirements called for by a nascent capitalism and the increased gentrification of society. Similarly, from 1880 to 1884, the National Party allowed for reconciliation between many moderate Liberals and Conservatives; in 1910, with the triumph of Republicanism in elections held that year, moderate Conservatives allied with Liberals; in 1946 and 1948, Colombia saw negotiations, however tepid, between moderate Liberals and moderate Conservatives given the sociopolitical debacle that was looming on the horizon. Most significantly, between 1958 and 1974, the National Front, the official political power-sharing pact between Liberals and Conservatives, continued into the mid-1980s to help resolve the political party crisis that emerged during the dangerous era of political exclusion in the mid-twentieth century. The collaborative National Front also helped dismantle the military political model imposed by the dictatorship of General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in the mid-1950s.

The National Front, through its agreements to alternate governance between the two traditional political parties, hid the kinds of disputes that had afflicted the state up until 1958—conflicts that were no longer about ideology as much as they were about control over bureaucracy. The emergence of the National Front also coincided with a notable secularization, urbanization, and gentrification of Colombian society. Similarly, parity in public office prompted citizens to change their political party affiliation as a kind of survival strategy so as to maintain or find employment with the state bureaucracy. This led to the breakdown of traditional loyalties at the same time that young people in cities no longer found political affiliation to be an important factor, either in terms of family unity or as a force in provincial or generational identity.

The state reform of 1991 favored the creation of new political parties, organized as an electoral strategy or as a clear political alternative to the dominant traditional political parties. No less important at this time was the increasing

corruption of some politicians, either through their ties to drug traffickers, insurgency, or paramilitary groups or through their use of public funds for personal benefit. The public became aware of the number of government functionaries who increasingly won political posts in return for political favors and not for their abilities, merit, or knowledge. This led to widespread skepticism by voters, if not outright abstention and depoliticization among a broad spectrum of the population. All this favored the "personalization" of politics during the thirty-two years since the constitution of 1991. Political parties are now electoral machines run by a single leader, who through personal charisma may acquire the characteristics of a *caudillo*. In this way, the traditional parties are no longer an essential aspect of Colombian national identity, but without them it is impossible to maintain an adequately functioning state. Despite this, for all their faults and foibles, and for all of the violence they have unleashed, the traditional political parties have been essential for the construction of a shared political identity that unites and divides Colombians as they search for solutions to some of their most entrenched historical challenges.

COMMUNION IN BELIEFS

Catholicism emerged as a central force in building a common identity for Colombians during the formative years of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Catholicism unified a state that was trying to construct a nation. The religion dominated for centuries, clearly shaping and homogenizing a system of common cultural practices for the population. This was in part underscored by a state that offered the Catholic Church a kind of protection by supporting its institutionalism and moral dictates. The protection was expressed in constitutions and through the granting of a monopoly over education to the Church over the course of several decades. Children and adolescents in every corner of the country received Catholic instruction. Furthermore, the Church, via its religious orders, engaged in active missionary work among the more far-flung regions of the country, incorporating indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations into Colombian society that had been marginalized during previous centuries. In this way, Colombian society increasingly constructed an identity as a community not through participation based on a civil code of ethics, but rather through obedience to the rules dictated by Catholic morality. Thus, the political community was indistinguishable from the community of believers. Today, this situation has changed in favor of a secular state. This has not necessarily occurred because of the social effects of secularization of the population, which is quite limited, but rather due to the

loss of command and control held by the Church hierarchy over the general assembly of the nation and the state.

The Colombian nation was born in the Catholic faith and remained so until 1991, but this does not mean that religious intolerance has uniformly prevailed in Colombian society. For the most part, citizens have respected freedom of religion. Still, only the Roman Catholic Church has had access to state institutions allowing it to proselytize to its own advantage. Similarly, if the nation was constructed from the state, and the state made its Catholic identity dominant, then the resultant identity was clear: to be Colombian meant to be Catholic.

To ensure that Colombia's identity remained Catholic, churches were built in each and every plaza of all Colombian towns. These were in addition to the many Catholic parishes, schools, convents, hospices, and hospitals that, without exception, counted on the exclusive support of the state and local societies. Thus, the Catholic Church maintained itself in daily life and in the festivals and celebrations of the Colombian population, granting a certain sense of community to a new nation.

Of course, Catholicism was one of the legacies inherited from centuries of Spanish rule that pro-independence republicans refused to renounce. The very statements/declarations of independence that were produced in 1810 invariably guaranteed the continuity and protection of the Catholic Church in the new autonomous province. This is expressed, for example, in the minutes of the newly formed Santafé Junta of July 20, 1810, which describes the oath that the deputies had to take: "With one hand on the Holy Gospels and with the other making the sign of the cross, in the presence of Jesus Christ crucified they said: 'we swear by the God who exists in Heaven, whose image is made present, and whose sacred and worshipful maxims are contained in this book, to religiously carry out the constitution and will of the people expressed in this act, concerning the form of provisional government that has been installed; and to defend our sacred Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion until the last drop of blood has been sacrificed.'"[4] Subsequent constitutions, including that of 1991, but with the exception of 1863, were enacted with a formula that in one way or another expressed that God was the source of all authority or at least invoked God's protection.

Why the break with God in the 1863 Constitution? Radical Liberals dominated the state after the civil war of the 1860s and held control until 1880. They proposed a secular state as the formula for governance, but by 1876 this proposal was met with much resistance from both Conservatives and non-Radical Liberals. The constitution of 1886 broke with the secularism of Radical Liberals; though it did not ban religious freedom (article 39), it did limit worship to religions that would not offend Christian morality and law

(article 40). Article 38 clearly established that "the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church is the religion of the Nation. Public powers were to protect it and ensure that it would be respected as an essential element of social order. It is understood that the Catholic Church was not, and would not be ruled by the state, and it will maintain its independence."[5] The reform of 1936 completely suppressed article 38 and limited the powers of the Catholic Church over the state. It did not, however, change the state's religious identity, although it ultimately upheld freedom of religion provided such "freedom" did not run contrary to Catholic morality or law. And so it remained until 1991, when the formulation of a so-called social state of rights forced the eradication from the Constitution of any consideration of origin or religious preference. Colombia became a secular society in 1991. The constitutional structure that supported one specific religious tradition over all others collapsed in that year. A ruling by the Constitutional Court in 1994 reaffirmed this:

> The Constitution of 1991 establishes the pluralist character of the social state of Colombian law, of which religious pluralism is one of its principal components. Similarly, the Charter precludes any form of sectarianism and enshrines full rights to religious freedom and equal treatment of all religious denominations, given that the invocation of the protection of God, which is made in the Preamble, has a general character and does not specifically refer to a particular Church. This implies, therefore, that in the ordering of the Colombian constitution, there is a separation between the state and the Churches because the State is secular. In effect, that strict neutrality of the state in religious matters is the only way in which public powers may ensure pluralism, an egalitarian coexistence, and the autonomy of the different forms of religious worship.[6]

The power the Catholic Church gained with the victory of the Conservatives allied with moderate Liberals in the civil war of 1885 and the subsequent 1886 constitution was reinforced by the agreement signed between the Colombian state and the Vatican in 1887. Known more formally as the Concordat, this treaty gave the Catholic Church, among its already existing safeguards, control over the official registry of citizens, uniting the entire population through baptism, assuring control over public education of children and adolescents, and mandating the kinds of materials that could be taught in private schools with respect to morality. The Catholic Church also obtained economic aid and tribunal exemptions, especially in areas where indigenous populations lived "unincorporated" into Colombia, and where there was an extremely limited presence of the state and the Church. In 1902, the Concordat reached the pinnacle of power when, by Decree 802, the state was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and as a consequence, a temple

was built in Bogotá, the "Church of the National Devotion" or El Voto Nacional, which served to remind everyone that the Colombian state and the nation were Catholic.

The relative autonomy sought in this arena with the reform of 1936 only served to further radicalize the partisan animosities that bathed the country in blood during the mid-twentieth century. In 1952, the decree of 1902 celebrated its fiftieth anniversary under the complete dominance of the state by the Radical Conservatives, led by Laureano Gómez. The first law of that year not only renewed the consecration made in 1902 but also ordered that this consecration be made by the president of the republic or his representative. Moreover, it made certain that this conservative ceremony be repeated yearly on the day that the Catholic Church celebrated the day of the Sacred Heart of Jesus—a Catholic "movable" feast day celebrated each year nineteen days after Pentecost Sunday. This date, thereafter, became a national holiday called *Acción de Gracias*—Thanksgiving. This imposition continued during the following years as the dictatorship of Rojas Pinilla honored its ties to the moderate sector of the Conservative Party and the government administrations of the National Front. Subsequent regimes (through 1991) refused to challenge this public linkage of state and church, fearing disruption in public order were they to do so.

Contrary to what many feared, the step taken in 1991 to end the profound alliance between Catholicism and the Colombian state did not cause a public disruption in Colombia. By 1991, the global Catholic Church was itself in a state of crisis. In Colombia, the additional dynamics of a society that was growing increasingly urban and welfare oriented and more open to the values and conceptions of "materialism" prepared Colombians for a more secular society. These changes gained momentum during the mid-twentieth century and finally allowed the Colombian state to declare itself openly secular by 1991. As in the case with political parties, this change occurred only after Catholicism had significantly influenced the creation and consolidation of the nation. The Church has had a profound social, cultural, and political impact and is still visible today in the holiday calendar of Colombians, through shared practices of celebration and mourning, and in the number of children and adolescents who continue their education in Catholic social and moral teachings. Today the state is not officially Catholic, but that is largely because it is no longer necessary to declare it as such. Despite the fact that most people do not acknowledge this openly, Colombian society is, in many ways, as Catholic as it was a century ago.

A COMMON MEMORY

In the midst of controversy and confrontations concerning what Colombia would become, all sides agreed on three fundamentals: first, the urgent need to educate people; second, that people should know about the wealth and possibilities offered by the territory in which they live; and finally, that people should share a common explanation concerning what it meant to be Colombian as compared to other peoples. By the twentieth century, it was clear that all Colombians shared a common memory, one that efficiently created a kind of identity that continued into the end of that century. This occurred through education and its institutionalized system for control over its content; by conveying detailed knowledge of the territory and its people, which not only facilitated governance but also allowed Colombians to know and identify one another; through the defense of Spanish as the national language; and through the construction of a collective past that adequately explained the origin of the nation.

The centrality of education is critical in any democratic system. The electoral process is based on rational decision-making, which is facilitated through growing literacy rates. For this reason, as noted above, the constitutions of 1832 and 1843 required that citizens be literate. But since the majority of inhabitants were not literate, the implementation of this requirement was deferred until the state met its obligation to educate all those who could be citizens—namely, males with a certain level of economic security and income. Subsequent constitutions failed to mention the literacy requirement since it came to be understood, during the nineteenth century, that providing free, basic education for all inhabitants was an indisputable function of the state. This notion and practice continue today. The basic state obligation to educate, therefore, emerged during the earliest days of the republic.

Scarce resources during much of the nineteenth century prevented universal education, but when funding was made available, monumental disputes developed over the content of education in Colombia. In general, a consensus developed that all students should be taught according to a single, similar program that should be obligatory in every corner of the country so as to create a unity of consciousness and, at the very least, the same basic skills needed to confront the requirements of modern life. Most everyone agreed that the basic function of education was to train the populace in the basic requirements of writing, reading, and mathematics. Beyond this, however, there was no agreement among contenders who sought to control Colombian education. Like most disagreements in Colombia from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, educational disputes merged with political party factionalism. The civil war of 1876 is an example of disagreement over education

resulting in conflict. This war represented the rage of the Conservative Party, with the Catholic Church, against the education reforms introduced beginning in 1870 by Radical Liberals in power. Their reforms imposed a secular education, state intervention in education, and the hiring of a pedagogical mission of German Protestants with the purpose of creating teacher training schools in all of the states in the federation.

The resultant Conservative backlash inspired the 1886 constitution, which litigated on behalf of the Catholic Church during the next fifty years for control over education in the country. The constitution turned complete control of public education and the right to oversee private education to the Roman Catholic Church. Article 41 of the Constitution of 1886 established that public education would be organized and conducted in accordance with the Catholic faith. This resulted in dissidents turning to the private sector, supported through the principle of freedom of education, also upheld through the 1886 constitution. Nevertheless, that freedom was limited because the Church had the capacity to intervene and oversee education with respect to "moral" issues. Liberals, who held power from 1930 to 1945, limited the power of the Church, but the Church still held control over the education system. Notwithstanding this trend, the processes of urbanization and secularization during the last years of the twentieth century meant that the church eventually lost de facto power over the Colombian education system.

At the same time the controversy over education took root, the state encouraged the development of scientific expeditions that would provide greater knowledge of the territory and its inhabitants. The Chorographic Expedition, organized during the first administration of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera (1845–1849) and led by the Italian Agustín Codazzi, explored practically every inhabited region at the time and ventured into territories that had yet to be settled in the eastern regions of the country. The purpose of the Chorographic Expedition was to develop a single cartography that would prove fundamental for the emerging state and governing officials. Thus, financing the expedition became a national priority, and the dissemination of its results occurred via the educational system. The state made the study of geography an obligatory subject in schools; texts were written that offered a uniform idea about what Colombia was in its regions, its peoples, its customs, and its resources. Thus, the geographer and the cartographer were indispensable to the state. The need for trained professionals in this endeavor gave rise to the Office of Longitudes and Borders in 1902 and the Geographical Society of Colombia in 1903.

The defense of the Spanish language as the only language for the nation emerged from independence as a banner for the new governing officials. The Spanish language, together with the Catholic religion, would be the two

legacies of the colonial era that would be consciously preserved. All other traditions of the monarchical regime, such as control over production and commerce and an educational system that ignored sciences and mechanical trades, were to be abolished. Regarding language, it was relatively easy for independence leaders to agree that all citizens needed to speak the same language. Both Liberal and Conservative constituents supported the dissemination and purity of the Spanish language via education in all schools. For this they founded the Colombian Academy of Language, which began its work on August 6, 1872, as an institution that would ensure the health of the language, allow for control over neologisms, support philology, and publish grammar texts.

Similarly, since the mid-nineteenth century, Colombians would work to establish the origin of a repertoire of Colombian literature. This issue is important because it ultimately implied defining what was properly national—that is, what is Colombian. José María Vergara y Vergara was a major figure of this literary generation of the mid-nineteenth century. In 1867, he published *Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada*, the first of many significant works. The value of this work in particular lies in the fact that it confronted the question of origins and resolved the problem through a catalog of Colombian literature written *prior* to 1810. In fact, the texts and writers historicized in the chapters dealing with the colonial era formed the basis from which the repertoire of national letters of the early republic would emerge. For example, a few years after Vergara y Vergara's work, Isidoro Laverde Amaya, in his *Ojeada histórico-crítica sobre los orígines de la literatura Colombiana*, listed Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, the "Spanish" founder of Bogotá, as the first "Colombian" writer. He continued with the colonial chroniclers and ended his work with the founder of Colombian journalism, Manuel del Socorro Rodríguez. The independence model in Colombia, which prevented any consideration or discussion of pre-independence literature, had matured: national literature, by the mid-nineteenth century, could now be traced back beyond the watershed of the break with Spain. Colombian literature finally had a past, and the Spanish language thereby became patrimony—a constitutive legacy of the nation.

Something similar happened with historiography. The construction of the state and its consolidation required the writing of its history from its origins, inheritances, and great patriotic deeds. This task had already been clearly realized when the celebration of the first centennial of independence took place. It was made to coincide with July 20, 1910; the celebration spilled out onto the streets of Bogotá and was celebrated in other regions of the republic. The story of Colombian independence was no longer tied only to several provinces; it became a history that was common to all, and independence

history was now a history of the state. July 20 signified the unified and collective celebration of a triumphant, democratic, centralist state born out of the constitution of 1886. The main figures of the independence movement were presented as founding fathers, who were accompanied by new heroes, those who gave their lives in multiple nineteenth-century civil wars, for the sake of a centralist state. The judgment passed on presidents prior to Rafael Núñez was based on the extent to which each had contributed toward the consolidation of the Colombian state of 1886. This new vision of the past was accompanied by a new civil liturgy, the Acts of the Twentieth of July, which were regulated and reproduced throughout the country. To consolidate historic memory and oversee the "truth" in such matters, the Colombian Academy of History was established in 1902.

The twentieth century inherited this historical construction and maintained it, keeping it alive into the present among some social classes, although it is now evident that this idea of history no longer holds a firm grip on the historical imaginations of the youth, academics, or ethnic groups. Newer history texts relay wider, more complex versions of history.

During the 1960s, new history books were developed for high schools that completely revised what had been considered undisputed at the beginning of the twentieth century. This "new history" had already been the subject of much discussion at the university level and quickly filtered down to basic primary education. The social movements that in one way or another developed during these years created a different historical framework, a new past, and this led some sectors of society to a wider understanding of the parameters set out in the constitution of 1886. New interpretations of history called for the creation of a new state, grounded in pluralism, to include all Colombian historical and cultural heritages. The deep socio-historic questions of the 1960s, developed in Colombia and elsewhere in the West, forced a reconsideration of the centralized state and politics and ideological purity while pushing for expanded heterogeneity of the Colombian nation.

A SINGLE INSTITUTIONALISM

Other social forces and activities developed by the state strengthened the idea that all Colombians belong to the same community. This did not mean that local customs and practices were abandoned. In this sense, Colombians' capacity to understand themselves as Catholic, as Spanish-speaking, as members of one or another political party, as educated according to the same foundations and contents that others had experienced, and as the inheritors of a learned common past—did not mean that regional particularities were

erased. This was because the ideological superstructure imposed upon all Colombians generated ties among inhabitants. The Colombian nation is not based, per se, upon one common culture, but rather on the idea—imposed by the state and dominant elite—that all Colombians form part of the same community. Similarly, the actions taken by the elites who run the state, who come from different regions of the nation, ended up strengthening the idea of unity among all Colombians who have had to learn to live under the guidance and protection of the same institutions.

Several forces worked toward this end. We will begin with the armed forces, which began to take shape as a unified and hierarchically organized institution in 1886. Until that date, which represents the triumph of centralism and the beginning of presidentialism, each state organized and financed its own army. The central state counted on only a national guard, which never had more than seven hundred men, since the midcentury Radical Liberals were ideologically opposed to a strong, centralized military. Thus, social and political forces that brought forth the triumph of centralism also saw that the organization of a single army would concentrate the monopoly of force in the state. Dissolving the regional armies and militias was a primary task for the central government during the last years of the nineteenth century.

The serious political tensions that emerged among the radical factions of both parties blocked the process of unification of regional armies into a single national army. Professionalization and institutionalization of the army occurred in 1907, under the presidency of Rafael Reyes. His administration founded the Military School of Cadets, and he hired a military mission from Chile to help organize the new institution.

With the passage of time and the presence of other military missions hired from abroad, the national military took form. Starting in 1919, the Colombian Military Aviators (renamed the Colombian Air Force in 1994) joined the national armed forces. The National Navy, after several attempts at organization during the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, was finally established in 1935, the same year the Naval Cadet School was founded in Cartagena. This school was designed with national unity in mind: two cadets from each department and five from the nation's capital city would be admitted annually to this prestigious academy.

The National Police, organized in 1890, was actually born out of the police force raised for Bogotá under the influence of the French *gendarmerie*. This occurred despite a presidential decree in 1891 that ordered the elimination of departmental and municipal police forces but, at the same time, provided funding for a new police force under the Ministry of Government. The national character of the police thereby took shape, but its character as a civil or military institution was increasingly debated. Conflict over its political use

by the political party in power overshadows this institution's history during the first five decades of the twentieth century. In 1953, the dictator Rojas Pinilla incorporated the police in the Ministry of War and, in doing so, converted it into a military force. This lasted until 1991, when the new constitution restored its civilian character.

Colombian political economy from 1886 to the present illustrates a history of national unification that is rooted in the conceptions and practices of the central state. Of course, ideological differences that were often irreconcilable emerged over time, leading to deep divisions among elites who understood themselves as "national" elites. What is worth noting is that such disagreements were discussed and resolved through partisan control of the state. Thus, the elimination of the federal states went hand in hand with the abolition of duties, tolls, and other obstacles to internal trade and free movement of people within a truly national territory. On the other hand, political economy and, in particular, all aspects related to the agro-export system, distribution of uncultivated state lands, and imposition of labor conditions favored entrepreneurs in cities and landowners in rural areas. These capitalist-friendly policies were defended by the moderate sectors from both parties, facilitating the implementation from early on of an economic bipartisan system at the national level.

Similarly, the creation of the National Treasury, as the only system of taxation and administration of national assets, generated the necessary resources for the state to promote policies, build institutions, and pay for a bureaucracy that was required for running the country. Equally important was the appearance of associations to generate income with offices in all regions where particular activities were important, usually in the provincial capitals. These included the Agricultural Society of Colombia (1871), the National Federation of Coffee Growers (1927), the National Association of Manufacturers (1944), and the National Association of Merchants (1945), to mention just a few of the most influential associations still active today. They served to control the links between the sectors of power in an economy that was already national in scope.

The consolidation of a national currency, the *peso*, and the creation of the Bank of the Republic as a result of the Kemmerer Mission of 1923, which created a uniform set of policies and controls over money and credit, gave stability and credibility to the economic system in all regions and municipalities of the country. This system also had a symbolic value, one of unity, in that it inspired within the Colombian citizenry trust in the *peso* as the only medium of exchange. Another example of state unification includes the implementation of unique systems of control throughout the state such as the comptroller general or the different superintendencies. These structures were designed to

strengthen the central character of the state by developing uniquely Colombian institutions throughout the territory. This occurred at the same time that a central ideology increasingly gave rise to the consciousness of what it meant to be Colombian. Colombians began to travel along the same path, but perhaps not all in the same way.

NOTES

1. Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, "Los partidos políticos en la Nueva Granada," in Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, *Antología del pensamiento político Colombiano*, vol. 1 (Bogotá: Banco de la República, 1970).
2. *El Aviso*, July 16, 1848.
3. Mariano Ospina Rodríguez and José Eusebio Caro, "Programa Conservador de 1849" in *La Civilización*, October 4, 1848.
4. "Acta de la Independencia," Instituto Colombiano de Cultura, *Revolución de 20 de julio de 1810. Sucesos y documentos* (Bogotá, 1996), 77.
5. "Constitución de 1886," *Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes*, www.cervantesvirtual.com. Accessed June 3, 2011.
6. Corte Constitucional de Colombia, Sentencia no. C-350/94.

Chapter Five

Conflict

Colombia's history has been defined by epic conflicts. In recent years, judging from book titles and articles published in the international press, the words *Colombia* and *conflict* are almost synonymous. This chapter explores the historical dimensions of conflict in Colombia by organizing the discussion of conflict around four key categories: politics, international relations, social structure, and (more recently) illegal narcotics. Some conflicts, of course, fall into more than one category, such as the long period of violence known simply as La Violencia during the late 1940s and 1950s. During the nineteenth century, political conflict was the norm rather than the exception, but Colombia is not unique in a Latin American context; comparing Colombia with Mexico or Argentina during the nineteenth century reveals common patterns of conflict surrounding the difficult task of constructing a nation after three hundred years of Spanish colonial rule. For the twentieth century, historian Michael F. Jiménez points out dramatic social strife in Colombia. Though quasi-social harmony (defined as the relative absence of fighting) existed for about a twenty-five-year period, from 1904 to the end of the 1920s, the Colombian twentieth century has been marred by a complex array of conflicts—conflicts that have spilled over into the twenty-first century and have affected neighboring countries such as Ecuador and Venezuela.

Despite endemic conflict, Colombia has held together as a territorial entity, with the exception of the separation of the Province of Panama, which resulted from a myriad of colliding national and international factors. Colombians have been able to resolve conflicts through creative methods and intermediaries. At least five distinct historic examples help illustrate this. First, the Comuneros rebellion began in Socorro in 1781 and gathered strength as frustrated folk marched to Bogotá to demand an end to the hated tobacco monopoly and increased taxes on tobacco, cane liquor (*aguardiente*), and

other products. The folk army, some twenty thousand strong, was stopped at the town of Zipaquirá, about twenty-five miles or a day's walk from the capital. The crowd dispersed, which prevented the sacking of Bogotá, after the archbishop, the Spaniard Antonio Caballero y Góngora, negotiated a settlement with the rebel leadership. The archbishop reneged on the agreement, and the primary leaders of the movement were captured and killed; the principal leader, José Antonio Galán, is viewed as a hero and martyr in Colombia.

Next, in the early twentieth century, President Marco Fidel Suárez pushed for a diplomatic and political realignment with the United States. Diplomatic relations had been frozen with the United States since the 1903 Panama intervention, but Suárez recognized the importance of aligning his nation with the vibrant nation to the north, the "Polar Star"—the United States. Diplomatic efforts led to the final payment of a twenty-five-million-dollar indemnity to Colombia for the arbitrary, aggressive Panama intervention of 1903.

Third, during the late 1950s, the Colombian ruling elite came together to try to end a decade of unrelenting sociopolitical violence. They created the Frente Nacional (National Front), which represented a creative, functional power-sharing arrangement between the two established political parties. The Liberals and Conservatives—rather than kill each other in rural sectors of the nation—agreed to alternate in the presidency for two four-year terms. The unintended consequence of this power-sharing arrangement was that it pushed people who belonged to neither party toward the sociopolitical margins and eventually into armed guerilla[1] forces.

Fourth, by the late twentieth century, Colombians came together to recast their society by rewriting an outdated constitution. The Constitutional Assembly was designed to mediate some of the social tensions that had caused so much mayhem and havoc during the 1970s and 1980s; in 1991, a new Colombian constitution was ratified. It modernized the state by declaring Colombia a multi-plural rather than "Hispanic" nation and guaranteed civil rights to all citizens, but it did little to solve the severe economic inequality that has allowed both insurgency forces and *narcotraficantes* to remain active.

Finally, conflict with the FARC came to an end in 2016, after a four-year negotiation. On August 29, the Colombian government and the FARC announced, at Havana, the cessation of hostilities via a bilateral cease-fire. On September 26, 2016, both sides signed the formal peace accords at the city of Cartagena while the world looked on: the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry attended the ceremony together with Ban Ki-Moon, secretary general of the United Nations. Yet the Colombian people—on October 2, 2016—narrowly rejected the peace accords in a national plebiscite, but a revised document was presented to Congress and passed through both chambers by November 30, ending a gloomy, fifty-two-year political, social, and military conflict.

THE SPANISH EVACUATION

The Latin American wars for independence were epic in scope, territory, and organization. There were at least four "theaters" to the independence processes, resulting in the complete evacuation of Spain from America in the early nineteenth century, leaving the European ruling presence only in the Caribbean, at Puerto Rico and Cuba. In post-independence Colombia, the central problem involved the ever-recurring, anti-centralizing tendency of Colombian history, geography, and culture. Regional cliques, shaped by unique cultural standards and independent elite rule, did not immediately turn their attention to the capital city, Bogotá, for leadership or inspiration. Gran Colombia,[2] organized and maintained from 1821 to 1830, was the dream of Simón Bolívar, "the liberator," who concluded that a strong central authority was the only solution for Latin American people. Bolívar was frustrated in his attempt to rule, as dictator, over this group of nations, and one of his final pronouncements expressed his disillusionment: "America is ungovernable," he declared in 1830, shortly before his death. "Those who served the revolution have plowed the sea." Reflecting on more than twenty years of fighting against a centralized, overseas monarchy, people, particularly in Colombia, refused to return to any model that suggested absolute rule.

POLITICAL CONFLICT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Bolívar's death in December 1830—as noted earlier—at the north coast Colombian city of Santa Marta represented the literal end of the Gran Colombia experiment and the beginning of intense rivalry among factions that dominated Colombian politics and society for the next fifty-five years. An early conflict, the 1839–1842 "War of the Supremes," represented a revolt by people from the southwestern part of the nation, in and around the city of Pasto, who decried the federal government's meddling in local affairs. The uprising, which was suppressed by the central government under José Ignacio de Márquez, offers thematic clues to understanding future national conflicts. Regional interests would be pitted against the centralizing tendency at Bogotá; the Roman Catholic Church would fight to protect its power, special ecclesiastic privileges (or *fuero*), properties, and right to exclusive authority over the national education system. Colombia's church-state conflict was not outside the Latin American norm during the nineteenth century: Argentina and Mexico both engaged in armed conflict to determine the boundaries between secular leadership and the rights, duties, obligations, and power of the Roman Catholic Church. In Mexico, the Church essentially went to war

against the state over implementation of the Mexican liberals' anticlerical constitution of 1857. The Church (and its Conservative allies) lost the war but continued to fight, going so far as to support an invasion of the country by a European monarchy—the disastrous French intervention of 1862–1866.

Though by 1825 the Spanish monarchy had ceased to rule over the Latin American people, the strong vestiges of Spanish culture and society remained, most notably in the spoken language and the European religious system imposed in the earliest days of the conquest. The Catholic Church, with the demise of the monarchy, supported colonial-style hierarchy, fought against any social and economic change that might threaten its power and prestige, and worried about lax morality and Protestant education. The Church generally adhered to a Conservative sociopolitical agenda. The Liberals who ascended to power at midcentury would make it a point to harass the Church, but the Church would fight back energetically.

General José Hilario López ascended to the presidency of the Republic of New Granada in 1849 and continued the modernizing policies of General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, who exerted significant influence over the third quarter of the nineteenth century in Colombia. López managed to abolish slavery by 1851 but antagonized the Church by expelling the Jesuits in 1850 (the Jesuits were expelled three times from Colombia, something they have not forgotten even to this day) and ending ecclesiastic privilege. Disunity in the Liberal Party resulted in the short civil war of 1854 and ensured that the Conservatives would come to power under the leadership of Mariano Ospina Rodríguez, an elitist law professor who was "committed to the bourgeois values of orderliness, practicality, and hard work."[3] Ospina's government was racked by regional factionalism and demonstrated the difficulty of effectively ruling over the entire Colombian nation from remote Bogotá. Communication was slow, laws from the capital were ignored, and local military and economic elites held de facto power in far-off regions—particularly in the southwest Cauca Valley, where General Mosquera was the primary political and military force. Sensing Ospina's weakness to control the nation at large, Mosquera decided to rebel; civil war (1860–1862) concluded when Mosquera and the Radical Liberals finally took power and wrote a new federalist, anticlerical constitution that prohibited executive re-election after a two-year term.

Colombia should not be singled out among nineteenth-century nations of the Americas as more prone to conflict than others. Mexico went through a midcentury civil war and between 1838 and 1862 suffered at least three outside interventions. As mentioned above, the 1858–1861 Mexican civil war, the "War of the Reform," left tens of thousands dead and represented a dramatic loss for the forces of tradition and conservatism. The 1857 anticlerical

constitution in Mexico was the spark that led to conflict. In the United States, the Civil War started in 1861 and lasted until 1865, leaving 750,000 dead. That war had less to do with religion and was more focused on the issue of federal versus state sovereignty, the tensions surrounding the economic model for the young nation, and the role of slavery in American society.

General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera emerged as the undisputed political and military leader during this period in Colombia. A nineteenth-century *caudillo*, Mosquera fit the pattern of the all-powerful leader, but by 1876, new political forces came to dominate Colombia that were more in line with modern party rule. By 1880, the political pendulum had begun to swing away from Liberal anticlerical excesses and toward a more Conservative governing structure for Colombia. This is the year that Rafael Núñez emerged on the national scene, elected president from the north coast city of Cartagena. His election represented an important regional shift away from Mosquera's Cauca power base and an ideological shift that favored traditionalism in politics and social structure. He was re-elected in 1884, and in the following year, Radical Liberals staged a revolt against him, which he used as a pretext to dissolve the constitution of 1863. Núñez's "Regeneration" movement became the political platform that would represent a long period of hegemonic Conservative rule. A new centralizing constitution was written in 1886. This constitution returned power to the central executive and restored the prestige and power of the Roman Catholic Church. Colombia became a Hispanic, Catholic, and centralized nation. The 1886 constitution attempted to correct the decentralized, excessively federalist, anticlerical 1863 constitution, and the Conservatives' ties to the Church inspired them to sign a concordat with the Holy See in 1887. This concordat came to define Colombia's special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church and ensured that Colombia would be a Catholic nation—a reality that would impact Colombian culture, education, and politics for generations.

The political excesses and conflict of the fifty-year period from about 1830 to 1880—marked by confusion, Conservative rule, a Liberal political reaction, the emergence of Mosquera as regional ruler, civil wars, and revolts—all happened within the framework of a written, acknowledged constitution and a concern with elections—though they were hardly universal or representative competitions. This is one of the fascinating ironies that emerges when considering Colombia's nineteenth- and twentieth-century history: violent conflict has tended to occur within the strictures of constitutional procedure and process; and though the political conflict in Colombia during the nineteenth century seems almost interminable, it never reached the level of lurid madness of Mexico under Antonio López de Santa Anna (who ruled from about the mid-1820s through 1855) or the cruel, arbitrary brutality in

Argentina under Juan Manuel de Rosas, who ruled from 1829 to 1852. The Colombian nineteenth-century conflict is confusing because it is regionally focused, reflecting the geographic obstacles that define the nation and defy easy unification or political collaboration. These geographic challenges during the tumultuous nineteenth century provided the impetus to resort to regional rule, yet they forced Colombians to see the need for some sort of centralizing, unifying set of principles or documents.

The Conservatives' plan of government represented little more than political maneuvering designed to ensure that they would remain in power. Much like the Liberals before them, they ruled to the exclusion of their political adversaries. The extremely doctrinaire, traditional, and ultra-Catholic Miguel Antonio Caro emerged as the de facto leader of the nation after Núñez's death in 1894. Caro's arbitrary, exclusive rule, coupled with the declining price of coffee and an 1895 export tax leveled against the coffee industry, rankled Liberals, and by 1899, their frustrations boiled over in armed conflict. This conflict, the War of a Thousand Days, was a major South American civil war. For one thousand days, war was conducted throughout much of the national territory, which left approximately seventy thousand dead, slowed economic growth, and set back the fortunes of Colombia at the dawn of a new century. This partisan slaughtering, which sputtered to a halt by 1902 and represented real victory for neither Liberals nor Conservatives, established the precedent for a dangerous pattern in twentieth-century politics in Colombia: political exclusion as a catalyst of armed conflict. While other Latin American nations were forging modernity more or less in accordance with established "positivist" principles of the time (political order was equated with material progress, modern science, and technology, which were seen as elements of salvation), Colombia engaged in a costly civil war that altered the pace of modernization.

Thus, compared to other nations of Latin America, Colombia seemed an anachronism at the turn of the century: Mexico, in 1899, was swept up in the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship and modernization plan, Argentina welcomed European immigrants and pushed forward a successful agro-led export economic plan, and the young Brazilian republic was consolidating under the (literal) banner of a new positivist-inspired flag, "*ordem y progreso*" (order and progress). The devastating war in Colombia, by contrast, hurt the internal and export sectors of the economy and left the nation so weak, politically and economically, that the stage was set for some sort of outside intervention. By November 1903, Colombia was engaged in an international conflict with the United States that resulted in the separation, or independence, of the Colombian province of Panama. Though virtually no physical conflict ensued, the 1903 separation was one of the most devastating and humiliating events in Colombia's history as an independent nation and suggested the need

for bipartisan compromise in the country, the so-called *convivencia*, which emerged by early 1904 with the rule of Rafael Reyes and lasted for about twenty-five years.

PANAMA SEPARATES

In the spring of 1902, the U.S. Senate ratified a treaty known as the Hay-Herrán Treaty, named for U.S. Secretary of State John Hay and the Colombian chargé d'affaires in Washington, Tomás Herrán. The treaty allowed for U.S. control of a seven-mile-wide interoceanic strip of territory through the Province of Panama and authorized the United States to construct a canal there; the U.S. military would control and occupy that territory via a lease agreement with the Colombian government for ninety-nine years. The treaty was the final piece of a complex international diplomatic process dating back to 1850 and involving four nations: Great Britain, France, the United States, and Colombia.

The Colombian government at Bogotá hardly represented the aspirations or ideology of the people who lived on the distant north coast, including the Province of Panama. The Bogotá ruling oligarchs were traditionalists, lifelong members of the ruling Conservative elite who looked derisively on the culture, traditions, and political affiliations of the coastal residents, who gravitated toward Liberal Party principles and priorities. Panamanians had never felt fully integrated into the Colombian national ethos. The capital city of Colombia was distant and foreign to most Panamanians; Bogotá was accessible via an arduous, monthlong journey that took the traveler out to sea, up the Magdalena River, and, from Honda, up bumpy mountain roads to the capital. Panamanians paid taxes to the government but received almost nothing from Bogotá in social services (hospitals, schools, roads, and basic infrastructure) that would improve the lives of the people. Thus, in August 1903, when the Colombian Senate unanimously rejected Hay-Herrán and the prospects for construction of a canal fell apart, some Panamanians rebelled—with encouragement from the United States. The United States, in defense of the Panama Railroad Company (in which U.S. investors owned shares) and the uninhibited movement of goods over the isthmus, declared that Colombian troops would not be allowed to land at Colón on the Caribbean coast or Panama City on the Pacific to suppress said "rebellion." The separation of Panama, or Panamanian independence, never escalated to actual war between the United States and Colombia, but it represented international conflict between the two nations and resulted in a diplomatic stalemate that would last for more than a decade. Of course, Colombia permanently lost a key coastal

province, and politicians at Bogotá began to think of national rather than regional interests once the sobering lessons of this loss began to set in. Also, Colombia's geostrategic significance meant that competing interests would enter conflict in the earliest days of the twentieth century, a pattern that would repeat itself later as conflict generated by production and transshipment of illegal narcotics took hold.

The separation of Panama marked a profound turning point in contemporary Colombian history. Colombians began to worry about their pattern of oversized conflicts and settled into a period of what has been called "the New Age of Peace and Coffee."[4] The new Colombian president took office in 1904, shortly after the stinging loss of Panama; Conservative and elitist Rafael Reyes understood the meaning of the term *convivencia* ("living together as one," roughly translated) and sought to strengthen society through inclusion of alternate ideas in his government. Thus, he appointed Liberals to lower-level government positions and helped promote Liberal leadership in the officer corps of the Colombian National Army. Peace ensued for a generation or two, and higher coffee prices helped produce internal social and economic stability during the first decade of the twentieth century.

CONFLICT IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

If peace is defined only as the absence of formally declared war, Colombia could be considered "at peace" during the period leading up to 1932, when the nation engaged in a brief war with neighboring Peru. During the period after the First World War, Colombian elites worked to improve infrastructure through investment in costly and, given the realities of Colombian geography, chimerical railroad construction. Railroad construction implied "modernity," and the network of railroad lines nearly doubled during the six-year period 1922–1927, with a total of about 2,500 kilometers constructed. Road construction, air transportation, and other signs of modernity coincided with the 1920s coffee export boom. With the conclusion of the First World War, Europeans and Americans expanded their view of coffee as a luxury reserved only for the wealthy. Coffee drinking became the norm for elite and working-class tastes and sensibilities, and a mild roast coffee—the Colombian trademark—was the product preferred by U.S. consumers.

Despite the coffee boom, however, three areas of conflict came to define this period for Colombia, and one in particular resulted in thousands of deaths. Labor, land, and foreign conflict with Peru brought the "New Age of Peace and Coffee" to an end and, domestically, returned political power to

the Liberals in the election of 1930, after a forty-five-year period of rule by the Conservative Party. Labor disputes, fueled by European labor theories and the internationalization tendency of the recent Bolshevik revolution in Russia, arrived in Colombia, where labor conditions were trapped in a past that seemed, in some cases, medieval.

One place where a synergy of sorts developed between abusive labor conditions, foreign enclave ownership of land, control of a specific commodity (in this case, bananas), and the dynamics of a port city, privy to foreign ideas and forces, was Santa Marta on the north coast. There, in 1928, thousands of banana workers, fed up with abusive treatment by foreign management, payment in meaningless company scrip, and subhuman living conditions that contrasted so glaringly with the palatial luxury in which the foreign management lived, went out on strike. The ensuing massacre, at the town of Ciénaga, described in Chapters 7 and 11, was frightening in its severity and set an unfortunate paradigm for the remainder of the century: disagreements would be settled through violence—massive violence in this case—rather than through negotiated settlement.

Agitation in the countryside characterized this time period as well. Since the final days of the nineteenth century, a grave conflict began in the territories where colonization of vacant lands had occurred; these lands were expropriated by force or through deceit and were either rented out or attached to large estates. This "land grab" continued and grew worse just as the Great Depression shrank demand from the agricultural sector of the economy, and land consolidation intensified since the price of land remained relatively low at this time. Thus, poor people continued being pushed off the land by owners of large estates, and the people pressured the government to act on their behalf. These land disputes grew intense, particularly in the early 1930s, when poor people, confined to generations of grinding poverty in the countryside, expected reform out of a new government that promised to rule on behalf of all Colombians, not just the powerful and well connected. There would be no Bolshevik-style reform in Colombia, as pragmatism, elitism, and hierarchy still defined, to some degree, the character and tone of the Liberal republic. Marco Palacios puts it best by noting how, "On the whole, the Liberal republic left the social structure of the Colombian countryside more or less intact."[5]

A major conflict involving a Latin American neighbor developed in 1932: the war with Peru, or the "Leticia Affair." In September of that year, Peruvian forces occupied the Colombian Amazon city of Leticia, resulting in a wave of national indignation and jingoistic, patriotic fervor the likes of which had not been seen even after the 1903 separation of Panama. Colombia moved armed forces to Leticia by boats and planes to take back what was rightfully

its territory, according to a 1922 treaty between the two nations. The war was brief; Colombians are generally credited with having won the war, and Leticia remains, to this day, part of Colombia's national territory, its window on the Amazon. The war represented a needed boost for the armed forces and national leadership which, by 1932, had not yet recovered from the humiliation and mistrust resulting from the banana workers' massacre at Ciénaga four years earlier.

Latin America responded to the political, social, and economic crises of the 1930s by turning to "populist" leaders—charismatic men and, in the case of Eva Perón of Argentina, a woman—who helped open up some space between entrenched economic elites and the poor, many of whom made their way to the major cities from the countryside looking for work and opportunity. The populists challenged elites to invest in better housing and city sanitation for the poor, to allow workers to unionize, and to offer basic financing for evening classes and other opportunities whereby the poor could improve their position in society. The populists were pragmatic operators and rhetorically gifted, intent on maintaining social control while advancing their own political agendas.

Colombia's populist leader was a young, charismatic Bogotá lawyer named Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Gaitán studied law in Italy and was influenced by the rhetorical prowess of the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Gaitán identified with the working poor—his humble origins from a decidedly lower-middle-class, center-city neighborhood helped him connect with the people. He held a number of important political posts, including member of the Bogotá city council, minister of education and labor, and mayor of Bogotá. He ran for president in 1946 and won important cities, such as the capital and the coastal city of Barranquilla, but never enjoyed the support of the official Liberal establishment, which ran its own candidate that year, Gabriel Turbay, splitting the Liberal Party, handing the presidency to the Conservative candidate, Mariano Ospina Pérez, and breaking a sixteen-year period of Liberal political rule.

Gaitán was the favored candidate for the presidency in 1950, but he was murdered in the center of Bogotá on April 9, 1948, a day that changed the history of the nation, much as the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 changed U.S. society. The marginalized working class, people who felt that government, laws, and society were stacked against them, were stunned when their hope for a better future—mystically tied to a Gaitán presidency—evaporated with four shots of a revolver. The ensuing riot, known in Colombia as the "nueve de abril" and outside of Colombia as "the Bogotazo," left vast segments of downtown Bogotá looted and smoldering; the trolley car system was badly damaged, churches and ecclesiastic archives were burned, and

businesses—especially those that seemed to sympathize with the Conservative political agenda—were ransacked.

Of the major Latin American populist leaders of the era, including Lázaro Cárdenas of Mexico, the Peróns of Argentina, Getúlio Vargas in Brazil,[6] and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre in Peru, Gaitán is the only one to have died by assassination. Thus, the populist program ended abruptly, dramatically, and violently in Colombia, on April 9, 1948, and the urban chaos that followed in the capital and other cities throughout the nation reflected a sense that something monstrous had happened, engineered (allegedly) by the wealthy and Conservative establishment, to prevent the people from ever having a real voice in politics or society.

Urban political violence on April 9 intersected with rural political violence that had escalated after the 1946 election, when the return to national Conservative rule implied a return to the past—the days of Conservative hegemony of the nineteenth century. But political Liberals, having tasted power for sixteen years, were unwilling to return to a position of subordinate citizenry. The feckless, insulated Ospina regime, highly offended by the riots and looting in Bogotá, could hardly be counted on to provide national leadership at this time. And, with Gaitán gone, a creeping sense of disorder took hold and spread, growing gradually out of control. La Violencia, or "the violence," came to define the period from about 1946 to 1960 in Colombia. Some historians, including Catherine LeGrand, Michael Jiménez, Herbert "Tico" Braun, and Álvaro Tirado Mejía, argue convincingly that the violence dates back to the 1930s, originating from the onset of agrarian conflicts and pressures on the countryside. Those pressures, instituted largely by policies that favored large-scale producers in the agrarian sector, coincided with Liberal Party political ascent and resulted in the consolidation of landholding patterns and dislocation of poor agricultural workers. Weak central political leadership could not prevent social and political conflicts in regions that lay largely outside of the literal domain of the ruling political class at Bogotá.

It is impossible to date the origins of "the violence," but it is safe to say that Liberal-Conservative tensions, the root cause of the violence, had been boiling over since the 1930s. The return to Conservative rule in 1946 frustrated poor people, who felt they had been tricked, and the assassination of the most charismatic, engaged, and determined political leader of the era, Gaitán, led to an undisciplined era of outsized violence throughout the nation. Finally, the violence wound down by the late 1950s, thanks in large measure to a political program—an elite power-sharing arrangement called the National Front.

LA VIOLENCIA

In a country of regions, a nation that geographically defies unification, La Violencia was a phenomenon that clearly demonstrated the weakness of the Colombian state. The Colombian government, for all intents and purposes, was confined to the Plaza de Bolívar, the main square in Bogotá, and other main plazas at regional capital cities. People in the countryside had no incentive to obey arbitrary laws, radiating out from a distant capital and written by politicians who never understood rural life in Colombia. When the Liberal Party decided not to run a candidate in the 1950 election, politics became something other than electoral contests and governance: for Liberals who held no stake in the official political apparatus, violence seemed to be the only means for political participation. Thus vengeance killings, cattle theft, and long-standing familial and territorial disputes came to define reality for vast segments of Andean, rural Colombia, and the distant Colombian government was both unwilling and unable to stop any of this. Perhaps as many as 80 percent of the victims of the violence, roughly a quarter of a million people killed during a fourteen-year period (1946–1960), were young, male, and poor. The violence demonstrated a severe disconnect between urban and rural Colombians and between the wealthy and the poor, highlighting the dangers of demonization of political adversaries. Myopic, anemic leadership at Bogotá made people in the rural areas realize that the government could not respond and would not respond, so poor people took political matters into their own hands in the manner that was most functional to them. They destroyed their enemies, their neighbors, through visceral, brutal violence, and it took years for the nation's decision makers to take note and to develop a plan of action to stop or at least diminish the violence. That plan—a creative, collaborative effort called the National Front—was organized by elites in the capital city and offered some political breathing room for both parties. The National Front was the political agreement whereby the two traditional political parties, Conservatives and Liberals, would rotate in and out of the presidency every four years through competitive elections, though the competition would be interparty. This arrangement grew out of Colombia's unique nineteenth- and twentieth-century political history—discussed earlier—whereby one party would rule to the complete exclusion of the other party, offering little more to the party out of power than a challenge to mobilize for violence. There is little doubt that the National Front succeeded in dampening down rural violence, but hostility, anger, and revenge killings in the countryside did not end overnight because of an elite political agreement at Bogotá. Gradually, as in other Colombian conflicts, the violence grew counterproductive, as a developmentalist model took hold and work

began (with millions of dollars in funding from the United States) to rebuild the battered nation.

Another often-overlooked factor that contributed to a Colombian quasi-consensus against the violence was a book, published in two volumes in 1962. Three Colombians, the jurist Eduardo Umaña Luna of the National University at Bogotá, a prelate, Monsignor Germán Guzmán Campos, and a young intellectual, a sociologist who earned a doctorate at the University of Florida, Orlando Fals Borda, authored *La violencia en Colombia: Estudio de un Proceso Social*.[7] The book painted a clear, unsentimental account of the years of violence, based largely on fieldwork, interviews, and graphic photographs. The published work shocked the literati in Bogotá and throughout the cities; people in Colombia knew that violence occurred in rural areas of the nation, but the wealthy and well connected—most of whom could protect themselves from such phenomena—read this dispassionate report as one that seemed to come from a distant land. The book clashed with their concept of modernity and national development. *La violencia en Colombia* was published, it should be noted, just months after U.S. president John F. Kennedy visited Colombia as a way to show solidarity with the nation's political and economic elite. Kennedy allocated millions of dollars to Colombia—a nation he viewed as a model of democracy and gradualist development—for his signature development program in Latin America, the Alliance for Progress. He also, ironically, promoted the U.S. Peace Corps while in Colombia. Colombia would serve as the first nation in the Western Hemisphere to welcome the arrival of sixty-one Peace Corps volunteers in the fall of 1961.

The first paragraph of *La violencia en Colombia* expresses the lack of clarity that certainly existed in the early 1960s and, to a certain degree, characterizes contemporary Colombia. The authors wrote, "Much has been written about the violence, but there is really no agreement as to what it means."[8] The book established "violence" as a legitimate area of academic research—the researchers were referred to as *violontologos* or (roughly translated) "those who study the violence." For many years, during the 1960s up until quite recently, political and social violence seemed to be the major concern and focus of the academic community, especially scholars living outside Colombia, including American Robert Dix, American-born Paul Oquist, and French sociologist Daniel Pécaut, to name a few.

The creative solution to "the violence"—the emergence of the National Front—led to a new and unforeseen substructure of violence in the form of leftist guerilla insurgencies throughout the country. Colombians who wanted nothing to do with traditional Conservative or Liberal Party platforms were dismayed by the narrowness of the elite bipartisan agreement. How would the politically unaligned or disenchanted engage politically after the 1958

implementation of the National Front? Part of the answer came in the form of a revolution on the not-so-distant island of Cuba, months after implementation of the National Front. The Cuban Revolution of January 1959 provided enormous energy for the disenchanted, those who questioned traditional politics, political alignments, and economics in the Americas. The accommodating nature of the National Front represented, by January 1959, an opportunity for organization outside of the traditional party alliance in Colombia and gave birth, in effect, to the modern leftist armed insurgencies in Colombia, one of which—the ELN—is still operational in the country, though certainly their objectives and philosophy have mutated during their difficult, sixty-one-year existence.

INSURGENCY INTERVENTION

The ELN (National Liberation Army) burst onto the scene in Colombia in the department of Santander in the early 1960s. Disaffected university students, some of whom had traveled to Fidel Castro's Cuba in 1962, were the foundation of this group, which sought to imitate in Colombia Castro's path to power. The students ignored the specific historical and cultural dissimilarities between Cuba and Colombia and chose to focus on theory, most of which had been drawn up in Europe. The most famous recruit for the ELN was a dashing, bourgeois, Bogotá-based Roman Catholic priest, Father Camilo Torres Restrepo. Father Torres joined the ELN forces in October 1965 and was—foolishly—sent to the front lines. He died in combat in February 1966, and most Colombians consider his entrance into the forces an example of youthful naiveté and a national tragedy. Father Torres had a wide following, especially among the urban sectors, university students, and those who believed that historical, political and economic inertia in Colombia prevented any type of social mobility for the poor.

In 1964, the FARC (the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) formed; less cerebral or theoretical than the ELN, the FARC challenged the Colombian state up through 2016. It operated as a rural-based agrarian movement that came into being out of frustration with the failed agrarian struggles of the 1930s and 1940s, struggles that elicited little more than repression from the Colombian state. The FARC, which might have numbered fifteen to twenty thousand armed fighters in the early 1990s, diminished in size and significance and counted on about 6,300 armed fighters when peace accords were signed into law on November 30, 2016, after a difficult, contentious, four-year peace process.

The FARC's founding director, Pedro Antonio Martín Marín (nom de guerre, Manuel Marulanda; nickname, "Tirofijo" [Sure-shot]), died of natural

causes in March 2008, never having been captured by Colombian authorities. His death reminded people of an inconvenient reality: the Colombian state could not really control the entire Colombian territory. Tirofijo's death hurt the organization's morale, as evidenced by hundreds of deserters—many of whom had entered the guerilla forces as teenagers. Leadership passed to Alfonso Cano, but a persistent campaign against the FARC by the Colombian armed forces, a campaign financed largely with U.S. dollars, continued to disable the group, as evidenced by the September 2010 killing of the FARC's top military commander, "Mono Jojoy" (né Víctor Julio Suárez Rojas; nom de guerre, Jorge Briceño Suárez) about 120 miles outside of the capital city. Cano (né Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas) was killed by Colombian military forces in early October 2011. At the time peace accords were signed, the FARC operated with perhaps six to seven thousand armed fighters, and used kidnapping, extortion, and protection of the illegal narcotics industry as a means to finance its operations.

After a period of severe state-supported repression in the late 1970s, during the administration of Julio César Turbay—characterized by extrajudicial killings, illegal imprisonment, and a "state-of-siege" mentality and reality—the Betancur administration in 1982 offered a more conciliatory approach. Belisario Betancur is remembered fondly as a leader who offered a peace plan and amnesty to the various insurgencies that competed for power and attention in Colombia during this time period. The peace initiative came to a halt at the end of 1985 when the urban guerilla group M-19 stormed the Palacio de Justicia—the Colombian Supreme Court building.

The M-19 emerged in opposition to the presidential election of 1970, when Conservative Party leader Misael Pastrana won narrowly over Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, who ran as the ANAPO—Alianza Nacional Popular—candidate, representing the interests of students and workers. Many in the country viewed this presidential election as flawed and fraudulent, and the M-19 took to the streets with dramatic, folkloric flare as an "urban guerilla" organization. Its members stole arms from a military installation; in 1980, they overtook the Dominican embassy in Bogotá and held diplomats hostage. Their most daring act, and the beginning of their undoing, occurred in November 1985 when they stormed the Palace of Justice and held the Colombian Supreme Court hostage. They intended to hold a "show trial" of the Betancur administration, but military hard-liners, meeting in the Presidential Palace across the Plaza de Bolívar where the drama unfolded, found nothing humorous in the humiliating tactics of the M-19. The military stormed the palace, battering down the front door with a lightweight Brazilian tank, and the siege ended with the deaths of all but one of the M-19 insurgents, eleven members of the Supreme Court, and dozens of others; the siege left about one hundred dead. Some

people, about a dozen, seen leaving the palace under military escort, simply "disappeared." This tragedy is a benchmark in modern Colombian history and represents the beginning of yet another tragic phase in the context of the contemporary Colombian conflict.

Betancur's optimism and hope for a peace settlement crashed in November 1985, and the same year as the Palace of Justice tragedy, the FARC—reacting to the Betancur amnesty—formed a political party made up of demobilized fighters known as the "Unión Patriótica." This party made impressive gains in local elections in 1986, but over the next four years, into the early 1990s, the leadership of the UP was systematically eliminated by a number of webs of mysterious forces that included the military, hired murderers/paramilitary forces, members of rival leftist organizations, and, increasingly, powerful drug cartels. The violence against the UP diminished the prospects of a negotiated settlement to the conflict and generated a general sense of distrust between the government and those who have challenged the government's political authority through force.

NARCO-VIOLENCE

As the leadership of the UP was systematically eliminated—some 3,500 people killed by 1992, with an alarmingly low level of arrests or prosecution—the message from Bogotá was that extrajudicial killings of subversives, former or otherwise, would be tacitly ignored. Such an environment helps explain the dramatic growth of drug traffickers, so-called *narcotraficantes*, during the 1980s, when cocaine production, shipment, and financing became the principal domain of a group of audacious and savvy businesspeople based in three principal cities: Bogotá, Cali, and Medellín. The most notorious, Pablo Escobar, born in 1949 in Rionegro, Antioquia, began his career as a low-level thief—making money by stealing gravestones, grinding away the inscriptions, and reselling them (at a discount rate) to unsuspecting families of the more recently departed. Escobar was elected in 1982 as an "alternate" member of Congress (from Medellín) as his fortunes grew through the illegal production and shipment of narcotics, mostly cocaine, to U.S. and European markets. Colombia, for reasons both geographic and political, became the epicenter of the exportation of drugs from South America. Its status as the only nation in South America that fronts two oceans helped; its mountainous valleys provided geographic cover for clandestine laboratories and the coca leaf thrived at the midaltitude regions of Colombia (and in Peru, Bolivia, and other nations of the Andes). Politically, the decentralized, regional power structure, accompanied by a historically weak central government, allowed

people like Escobar to command and control a vast network of land, labor, funds, and politicians.

By 1984, the power and wealth of Escobar's Medellín cartel had become both notorious and obnoxious—Escobar had a zoo built at one of his palatial *fincas* in the Antioquian countryside and ordered the Colombian government not to interfere with his business. When the young, ambitious Colombian minister of justice, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, decided to prosecute money laundering and shut down some of Escobar's illicit laboratories, he was assassinated in 1984 on orders from Escobar. Lara's death sparked a ten-year war that pitted an often reluctant, sometimes outgunned Colombian government against well-financed, outlandish drug lords who took advantage of poverty and historic social inequality to form cadres of hired killers, known as *sicarios*, to do their dirty work. These teenagers, mostly from the Medellín slums, would accept the equivalent of about one hundred dollars to assassinate people, including police officers and politicians. The war intensified from 1989 to 1990, a period that historian Marco Palacios refers to as "the free fire zone."[9] In August 1989, Luis Carlos Galán, while campaigning for the presidency in Soacha, just outside of Bogotá, was gunned down on orders, most likely, from Escobar. Galán, the presumed successor to President Virgilio Barco, had promised to use the power of the state to dismantle the drug cartels, and his murder represented a gloomy descent into violence and despair; four candidates campaigning for the 1990 presidency, including Galán, were murdered. A terrible counteroffensive began.

Car bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations became part of daily life in Colombia until December 1993, when Escobar was finally captured and killed by an elite military unit in Medellín. With the death of Escobar, the Colombian police and military turned their focus to the Orejuela brothers, who controlled the Cali cartel. By the mid-1990s, the cartel system of systematic and complete control of all aspects of the narcotics business had been replaced by smaller, more dispersed, less visible, and less outwardly aggressive *cartelitos*. Drug production and shipment out of Colombia continued, protected by extralegal paramilitary and guerilla forces, but the struggle between entrenched cartels and the state seemed to have ended, though certainly not in a peaceful or harmonious way.

At the same time the Colombian state was engaging the drug cartels and the leftist insurgencies, a relatively new actor emerged in the early 1980s. This was the AUC (the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), or paramilitary fighters. The stories of the AUC's formation are multiple and hazy. One account, as told by the Mexican journalist Alma Guillermoprieto, describes a feud among friends that essentially grew out of context and control. She notes

that FARC fighters kidnapped "the father of a small-time drug and emerald dealer called Fidel Castaño."[10] Fidel and his brother Carlos would organize a formidable, highly disciplined fighting force to avenge the death of their father, who died while in FARC captivity. The AUC grew to as many as thirty thousand fighters at the apex of its power in the mid- to late 1990s, and its mere presence and the ghastly, gruesome massacres it orchestrated caused reasonable people to question who, in fact, was in charge in Colombia. Tens of thousands were killed in a new phase of conflict wherein the paramilitary forces moved in to take territory left behind by a retreating FARC and ELN and a shifting, lower-profile drug production process. By the late 1990s, the FARC and ELN were fighting the military, the AUC were fighting the leftist guerillas, the military was supposedly fighting the AUC, the FARC, and the ELN, and the drug barons were fighting the government while simultaneously fighting and collaborating with the guerilla forces. It was a confusing time in Colombia, and in the confusion and chaos, as the body count grew, the country seemed to be spiraling out of control.

PLAN COLOMBIA, 2000

Andrés Pastrana Arango, former mayor of Bogotá and son of President Misael Pastrana (who ruled as president from 1970 to 1974), took control of Colombia in 1998 as international attention focused on the nation and its ever more complex and seemingly impenetrable structure of conflict. Colombia was becoming somewhat of an anomaly in the region; peace accords had been signed in El Salvador in 1993 and in Guatemala in 1996. President Alberto Fujimori in Peru declared victory over the "Shining Path" insurgents with the capture of their leader, Abimael Guzmán, in October 1992. Yet in Colombia, the actors involved in the various conflicts seemed more entrenched than ever, and the state seemed no longer to hold the upper hand. This perception was reinforced by a new "peace plan" orchestrated by the Pastrana administration. Pastrana authorized a "safe zone," or *zona de despeje*, in the southeast of the country, more specifically at San Vicente del Caguán, a place where the military would no longer operate, as a sign of goodwill toward the FARC commanders. This gesture was intended to show the government's resolve to negotiate in the *campo* on terms familiar to the FARC fighters, many of whom had never seen the capital city of Bogotá. But the FARC, never particularly savvy political operators, used the 42,000-square-kilometer—Switzerland-sized—*zona* to warehouse weapons and their kidnapped victims; they loaded in cases of liquor and cartons of contraband cigarettes. Widespread reports of relaxing leftist insurgents living

rent free on the government's dime infuriated the urban elites and working-class citizens alike; Pastrana's popularity plummeted.

The peace process—the occupation of a Switzerland-sized territory in the middle of Colombia—alarmed the United States, and President Pastrana, while ostensibly planning for peace, successfully lobbied U.S. president Bill Clinton for an enormous aid package, worth 1.35 billion dollars of mostly military aid. This aid package, known as "Plan Colombia," was hurriedly debated in a U.S. Congress that never fully understood the complexities of Colombia but came to view it as a Western society spinning out of control. Pastrana prudently pressured and lectured Clinton and Washington power brokers on the importance of "saving" Colombia from itself. Plan Colombia was approved in the final days of the Clinton administration, and at that time, "Plan Colombia" turned Colombia into the third-leading recipient of U.S. foreign aid, after Israel and Egypt.

Toward the end of Pastrana's term of office, with no serious peace prospects in sight, the president ordered the military to move into the demilitarized zone and retake the territory. This occurred on February 20, 2002, and represented a defeat for everyone, but especially for President Pastrana, who seemed to have been outmaneuvered by the FARC commanders. This failed peace initiative paved the way for an outside candidate, the former governor of Antioquia and a vowed hard-liner against the left, to win the Colombian presidency in May 2002. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, whose campaign pledge was "*mano dura, corazón grande*" (a strong hand, with a big heart), an Oxford-trained technocrat with an unassuming political style and presence, became president in August 2002 and immediately went on the offensive. His decision might have been influenced by a FARC-organized rocket attack on the presidential palace in Bogotá, televised nationally on August 7, 2002, during his inaugural celebration. Neither the new president nor any of the dignitaries was injured, but wayward rockets did kill fifteen people and injured fifty, most of whom lived in a *casa de consumo*—"drug rehabilitation house"—in a seedy, notorious downtown neighborhood called "El Cartucho," which has since been bulldozed and turned into a public park.

President Uribe collected the funds from Plan Colombia (which total, as of this writing, about eleven billion U.S. dollars since 2000); "Plan Colombia" was re-named "Peace Colombia" in early 2016 at a White House Ceremony. The massive infusion in mostly military funding helped Colombia make headway against the FARC, pushing the fighters into the country's corners, but the FARC remained operational, even after Uribe's two terms as president. Even so, President Uribe clearly won the public relations war. He presented himself as an indefatigable patriot who would stop at nothing to defeat the FARC and other insurgents. He refused to refer to the FARC or the ELN

as "political" actors, instead adopting the lexicon that became most fashionable after 9/11: he called them, simply, terrorists. His redefinition campaign was facilitated by Washington, which put three Colombian organizations on its terrorist list: the FARC, the AUC paramilitary forces, and the ELN.

Uribe's determination to derail the FARC led to a Colombian armed incursion into neighboring Ecuador, where FARC forces were encamped, including the number-two commander, Raúl Reyes, who was killed in the March 2008 attack. Prior to the attack, the FARC lost (as noted above) its founding leader, Manuel Marulanda, and Iván Ríos, another member of the ruling secretariat. Though Uribe pronounced Marulanda's death as a sign of success for his policies, others noted that the guerilla leader had never been captured and had, in fact, eluded Colombian military forces for forty-four years.

The 2008 cross-border attack nearly led to war between Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. Leftist Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez ordered troops to the Colombian border in an apparent show of solidarity with leftist president Rafael Correa of Ecuador. Cooler tempers prevailed, and a regional war was avoided, but tensions in the region remained heightened until a new Colombian president, Juan Manuel Santos (August 2010–2018), reestablished normal diplomatic relations with both Andean neighbors. This is discussed in more detail in chapter 11.

The Colombian paramilitary forces continue to wreak havoc over the Colombian land. Though technically demobilized, they have since become criminal bands with de facto power in many places throughout the country. Their campaign against leftist insurgents, *campesinos*, and unionists has been truly terrifying. Union leaders, human rights activists, and those who call for just wages, better working conditions, or land reform for the poor have faced the terror of self-sufficient, unregulated, for-profit hired killers.

Searching for some sort of solution to this situation, the government initiated a discussion and approved, through Congress, "Ley 975" of 2005, which is now known as the "Law of Justice and Peace." The objective of this law was to allow all extra-official combatants—guerilla and paramilitary forces—the opportunity to voluntarily demobilize in exchange for freedom from prosecution and sentencing. The law sought to facilitate the reinsertion of armed actors into society provided these individuals turned in their weapons, confessed to the crimes they committed, and promised never again to join an armed group outside of the official military forces of the nation. The paramilitary forces took advantage of this "deal" and about thirty thousand fighters disbanded, though only about sixteen thousand weapons were turned in.

The Justice and Peace Law put into practice alternative sentencing, based on the idea that in order to advance national peace, and in collaboration with justice and reparations to victims, it is not always necessary to apply the

maximum sentence to guerilla or paramilitary fighters. Thus, Colombians created the National Commission of Reparations and Reconciliation, an institution charged with carrying out the new law as applied to the *insertados* (guerilla or paramilitary fighters who had, in fact, turned themselves in) while protecting the rights of the victims by determining the truth and seeking both justice and compensation for physical and material suffering and loss. Additionally, a "Commission for Historic Memory" (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica) was created and has been successful in developing detailed reports regarding some of the most terrible actions committed against the civilian population. One such document, a 431-page glossy, large-format book, is a complete, systematic account of decades of violence written in a nonacademic (i.e., clear and jargon-free) style. The book was published in Bogotá (2013) by the Grupo de Memoria Histórica as *Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de Guerra y Dignidad.*

Similarly, in June of 2022, a final report appeared under the title "Hay Futuro si hay verdad" [There is a future only when there is truth]. This report, published by the "Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición"[11] pushed the number killed in conflict in Colombia between 1985 and 2018 to over 450,000—a staggering number that shocked Colombians and non-Colombians alike. The report is based on exhaustive research and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 13. Such documents are all the more significant given that they were diffused and discussed in Colombia during a time of open warfare. Today, in Bogotá, Colombians are building a museum and archive dedicated to preventing Colombian society from forgetting the violent decades that have marked the recent past. That museum, called Museo de Memoria de Colombia was begun in 2020 and was scheduled to open in 2022, but due to the global pandemic and other factors, the project has fallen behind schedule. The site of the museum is in the city Center at Avenida de las Américas with Avenida El Dorado.

Conflict has been endemic in Colombia since the earliest days of the republic's founding. It has resulted from geographic factors which, in isolating large segments of the country, created strong regional identities and culture. Political factors paired with the historical weakness of the central government and the immense power of the Church and oligarchy contributed to tension in the nineteenth century that would spill over into armed conflict at various periods in Colombia's history. Outside meddling by the United States in the early twentieth century and disagreements with neighboring countries generated conflict, but most of the conflict in Colombia has been produced internally; vacillating leadership, inadequate prosecutorial customs, a tepid press, distant, diffident political officials, and outright fear have allowed murderers to kill with impunity in contemporary Colombia. But conflict does not define

the Colombian nation or its people. The resilience of the Colombian nation, a nation that has endured so much conflict, is evidenced in a difficult-to-quantify "Colombian style," which is informal, warm, accepting, and refreshingly suspicious of those who take too much for granted. Colombians have learned to live with great ambiguity and uncertainty. Conflict is part of everyday life, but so, too, is warmth, generosity, and a spirit of collaboration. Most Colombians try to transcend the daily political and social conflict by spending as much time as possible with family, friends, and visitors—a style of endurance influenced by Colombia's unique historical and cultural development.

NOTES

1. We use the English spelling "guerilla" as opposed to the Spanish *guerrilla* (literally, "little war"). Also, we interchange guerilla (as a movement) with "insurgency."
2. *Gran Colombia* is a nickname for the time period when Colombia comprised Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and Panama, 1821–1830.
3. David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 118.
4. See chapter 7 of Bushnell, "The New Age of Peace and Coffee (1904–1930)."
5. Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875–2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 107.
6. Tragedy characterized the demise of several Latin American populists: Getúlio Vargas committed suicide in his bedroom in the Presidential Palace in 1954, and the much-beloved Eva Perón died of cancer at thirty-three years of age in 1952.
7. Germán Guzmán, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña Luna, *La violencia en Colombia: Estudio de un Proceso Social* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1962).
8. Ibid., 23.
9. Palacios, 213.
10. Alma Guillermoprieto, *Looking for History: Dispatches from Latin America* (New York: Vintage, 2001), 31.
11. The Comission's title, in English, is "The Commission for the Clarification of Truth, a Coexistence and No Repetition."

Chapter Six

Colombians Search for Peace

After nearly six decades, the figures associated with the armed conflict in Colombia reveal a truly terrible situation. More than 450,000 people died as a direct result of the war during the most intense period of conflict, 1985 to 2018; 90 percent of those killed were disinterested dwellers living in combat zones. To compound this local blood terror, many survivors were forced to leave their homeland. The government and international agencies refer to this group as IDPs—internally displaced persons: more than 4,700,000 Colombians have had to leave their homes to seek refuge in large or medium-sized cities in the country. Armed groups abducted 27,000 individuals during the period between 1970 and 2010. Of the 150,000 killings associated with the war during the years 1981–2012, paramilitary groups were responsible for 38 percent, while 17 percent are attributed to guerilla groups; 10 percent of the deaths were caused by the armed forces, and "other" unidentified actors were responsible for the remaining 35 percent.[1] Colombians have worked in a determined, decisive fashion to end this conflict, for good. The solution has been neither clear nor simple. Over the course of some sixty years of fighting, the nation of Colombia grew, urbanized, and modernized; its inhabitants became cosmopolitan. Standards of living in major cities are now on par with the "developed" West, and this perception of progress continues, *despite* the conflict. For many Colombians experiencing better opportunities and more luxuries, the war became "invisible." It seems that willed ignorance, in Colombia as in other places, follows prosperity.

The diffusion of the conflict underscored this political disappearance. Since the 1980s, the conflict lost clear delimitations, as new actors entered into the fighting, such as drug traffickers and paramilitaries, who used truly terrifying techniques as a mechanism/strategy of war. Despite these factors, peace negotiations, from 2012 to late 2016, have settled the conflict with the

FARC-EP (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-Popular Army), via a Senate and House of Representatives vote on November 29 and 30, respectively. Still, the desire for revenge must not be allowed to asphyxiate a nation dealing with decades of deaths and property damage, a lack of confidence in the motivations of the opponent/s, and the dramatic disagreements that exist in terms of the recognition of the guerillas/insurgents as valid subjects for negotiation with the state and the monetary interests, ways of life, and power that grew out of nearly six decades of war.

THE NATURE OF THE COLOMBIAN ARMED CONFLICT

The origin of the contemporary armed conflict in Colombia has been all but forgotten. We can say, with hindsight's clarity, that the Colombian conflict has evolved through several stages, originated in several regions, and experienced many dramatic redirections during the war's complex and multidimensional development. The length and complexity of the war contributes to the fervent and contradictory approaches to the settlement negotiations today. To understand what the Colombians have been working to resolve, it is important to consider these stages and the variations of the conflict over time, since its duration is precisely related to this ability to adapt to distinct historic moments that have manifested in Colombia, and the world.

Six initial clarifications are important. First, this "conflict" was not—or has not been—a civil war, as Colombians did not break in two, due to differences concerning the model of social organization; also, guerilla groups, drug traffickers, and paramilitaries that entered and oxygenated the conflict do not represent a significant percentage of the Colombian population. Second, the state never fractured or weakened to the point of becoming a "failed" state due to the armed conflict—on the contrary, as evidenced by the previous chapters in this book. Third, the "Communist" orientation of the Colombian guerilla movement was essentially lost more than two decades ago, so the continuation of the armed struggle fell under nationalist, agrarian, and collectivist ideologies, representing distinct origins and reform proposals. Fourth, the guerillas, despite the metamorphosis of the armed struggle away from a struggle to achieve state/political power, have maintained heavily armed columns with great fighting capacity; they are actors in a war, and considering the motivation for their actions, they cannot be considered as mere common criminals. Fifth, the word *guerilla* is an oversimplification, since the groups were multiple, and quite different from one another—either through ideology, their internal organization, or their modes of understanding the war against the Colombian elites. Sixth, none of the actors of this war ultimately

triumphed convincingly over their opponents, meaning that only peace negotiations represented a path toward disarmament and the reintegration of individuals back into civil society, as has been the case of several guerilla groups and paramilitary organizations during the last several decades.

It is customary to find in Colombian historiography references to "war" as a sort of societal constant. This is true if we consider the variety of conflicts in the abstract—using the word *violence*, which masks the historical peculiarities of the armed conflicts in Colombia's recent history. The danger of this generalization is to simply conclude that Colombia is a violent nation. We do not accept this facile conclusion, but we do understand how violence tends to "partner" with the national state in contemporary world history. It makes little sense to assume that there has never been an end to the various armed conflicts that have taken place in Colombia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What we understand as the "recent" Colombian armed conflict had a clear beginning some sixty years ago.

The war began in the early 1960s. But like all wars, the Colombian conflict fits within an often quasi-violent causal chain that began much earlier; this violent residue radiated out from the armed confrontation between the liberal and conservative parties that unfolded in rural areas in the early 1930s, and reached its peak during the final years of the 1940s. Likewise, this long conflict developed during the years of the dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953–1957), after a widespread amnesty was offered to fighters, and transmuted into a partisan war mixed with the struggle for land ownership in the rich and fertile lands of the coffee region and the valleys of the Magdalena and Cauca Rivers. Essentially, in a surviving group of *campesinos* of this last stage of the bipartisan war, we find the origin of what was to become the strongest Colombian guerilla group—the FARC. At about the same time, a "new" group, but with a distinctly different origin unrelated to the previous "violence," emerged in the Department of Santander, the ELN—Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army).

THE STAGES OF THE WAR

There are five periods into which we can divide the sixty years of the current armed conflict in Colombia. What separate these periods are the clear distinctions in the way the war and its goals are understood, as well as the emergence of new actors in the conflict and, most importantly, the size of the armies and strategies employed to finance the conflict.

The first period covers the years 1960 to 1982. During these twenty-two years, the armed conflict had minimal intensity, and the impact of the external

situation, the Cold War, greatly influenced the way in which the war was understood by Colombian elites, the Colombian government, and the guerilla movements.

The birth of the insurgent movement in Colombia was characterized by the emergence, almost at the same time, of several armed groups, deeply divided and competing not only against the state and national elites, but also among themselves. The Colombian army was grossly unprepared to fight a guerilla war, given the geography characterized by dense jungles and rugged mountains; they were prepared, given their participation in the early 1950s Korean conflict, for "formal" war. On the other hand, the wide dispersion of insurgent movements limited their effectiveness and, despite their numerical growth over time, the insurgencies never represented a serious threat to the governing sectors of society.

ELN was founded in 1964 as an insurgency of *castrista* and *guevarista* (Cuban) orientation, composed of college students and other Colombian urbanites. The initial nucleus of the group was made up of eighteen combatants, including six students who traveled to Cuba with a grant provided by the Castro regime, and others, including the Catholic priests Domingo Laín and Spaniard Manuel Pérez—aka el *cura* Pérez—gave rise to the group in the early sixties.

On May 5, 1966, a group of 350 combatants, meeting at the Second Guerilla Conference, which took place from April 25 to May 15 of that year, decided to give formal organization to what was called the South Block, and from that time on, began to be called FARC, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*. At that same meeting, the organization's statutes and regulations were approved, as well as the military plan, which called for the "seizure of power." This group was the survivor of the peasant self-defense forces that had been organized at the beginning of 1960, under a project of rural collective economy and via divisions that had occurred in the ranks of the amnestied former liberal guerillas (of the eastern plains, or *llanos orientales*) of the 1950s. The influence of the Colombian Communist Party was important among this group of people and, indeed, in April 1964, several members of the party were linked to the group, some of whom would become leaders of the guerilla movement, such as Jacobo Arenas.

In May of that same year (1964), these same *campesinos* were harshly attacked by the Colombian army and air force, in what would become known as "Operation Marquetalia," or the "campaign of recovery," which is what one Congressman named the military operation to encourage the armed forces. Many in Congress and in elite positions of power in Bogotá were worried about the existence of "independent republics," or territories, under Communist control. The truth is, Colombia's military developed plans in

coordination with advice from the U.S. military, which implemented *Plan LASO* (Latin American Security Operation) to prevent the triumph of communism in Colombia. Communism was viewed as a singular, unidimensional evil, and Colombians actively participated in its "eradication" as part of the Colombian military's participation in the 1950–1953 Korean conflict. The onset of the "cold war" represented a sustained program of extermination of poor farmers in Colombia, people who defended their lands and, because of an internationally orchestrated campaign against them, radicalized and transformed into a serious South American guerilla insurgency.

As a result of a division of the Colombian Communist Party, the EPL (Popular Liberation Army) was formed on July 17, 1965. This occurred during the assembly of the Tenth Congress of the Colombian Communist Party–Marxist Leninist, which took a Maoist alignment. This orientation meant the revolution would result from a *campesino*-worker partnership, characterized by a prolonged popular war that would establish a Socialist Republic, directed by a party that was understood as the vanguard of the proletariat.

Another important guerilla group that was formed during this period was the M-19 (19 April Movement). Founded in an urban setting and ideologically diverse in orientation, it was anti-oligarchic, anti-imperialist, and *anapista* (of the ANAPO party), and far from the Castro and Marxism-Leninism ideologies of the other insurgency organizations. Their name refers to the still (somewhat) mysterious electoral fraud during the presidential election of 1970, which prevented the election of the leader of the *Alianza Nacional Popular* ANAPO (Popular National Alliance), Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, to the presidency, but instead elevated the candidate of the bipartisan alliance (which had held power since 1958), Misael Pastrana. On January 17, 1974, the M-19 staged their debut action by stealing Simón Bolívar's sword from the Quinta de Bolívar—a Bogotá museum that served as the home of the liberator when he passed through the city.

Other guerilla groups were born during the following years, such as the PRT (Workers Revolutionary Party), which emerged in 1975 from a division of the Colombian Communist Party and became an insurgent movement in 1982. In that same year, 1975, under the military training of the Colombian Communist Party, an indigenous/peasant insurgency emerged, taking the name of Quintín Lame, and dedicated to the self-defense of the indigenous population in the regions of Valle del Cauca, Cauca, Huila, and Tolima. In 1984, the group made what would be its first armed incursion, the taking of the towns of Castilla and Santander de Quilichao in the Department of Cauca.

A second period of the war can be bracketed between the years 1982 and 1996. This period was characterized by the relative diminution of the "cold war," in the international context, and profound changes in the war within

Colombia. These are the years when the growth of the FARC and the ELN as insurgent movements transformed from small, relatively benign groups into strong insurgent armies. This is also the period when self-proclaimed "self-defense" organizations—the paramilitary forces—emerged, and drug trafficking became a viable mechanism for financing the internal war. Also during these years, a new constitution was debated and approved, in 1991, and the first peace processes were carried out with some success.

The transformation that took place in the FARC was notable during these years. In May 1982, the Seventh Conference of the FARC met, attended by twenty-seven guerilla fronts or more than three thousand insurgent fighters. The result of this conference: the FARC transformed into a popular army, which led to a name change, FARC-EP (*Ejército del Pueblo*, or Popular Army). It was decided that the movement should expand to about twenty-eight thousand combatants, and that recruitment would focus on Colombians between the ages of fifteen and thirty years; it was determined that each guerilla group would carry out at least four armed attacks per year. Eight billion pesos would be raised to finance the war in a march to commandeering power over the Colombian state. To achieve the stated objectives, the FARC-EP decided that all means of struggle were valid. This final decision would have serious consequences in the future because it essentially "deformalized" the war and signaled a significant loss of civil support once held in both urban and rural sectors of the country.

The years 1996 to 2005 represent a third period in the Colombian armed conflict. These were the years when the internal war reached its maximum development, with serious consequences for Colombia's civil population. The third actor, the paramilitaries, with drug trafficking as the funding mechanism, also took on greater participation in the conflict, while the state, notably the armed forces, began to find its footing and act somewhat successfully in its role as defender of the state. However, this gradual professionalization of the military was still in its infancy stage at this point, which translated to palpable military successes for the insurgency during those years. In the case of the FARC-EP, its growth, accompanied by greater capacity for military action and its goal of becoming a popular army, led the group to adopt a war strategy focusing on "fixed" positions. In other words, the FARC became an army that considered territorial control as the most important objective, and they dropped a strictly "guerilla" strategy.

At the beginning of the year 2002, there were probably twenty-one thousand individuals directly involved in the FARC-EP and approximately ten thousand militias—folks associated with the organization but living in a non-clandestine manner, in the cities, while providing support for the group. The degradation of the war (i.e., the formal rules of war became largely

meaningless) became the mode of combat accepted by all opponents, making "terror" the preferred method of population control, resulting in multiple acts of barbarism against civilian populations, including massacres and forced displacement. The ferocity of the conflict led to a considerable change in perception of the war, and a profound transformation in public opinion: the public, in Colombia and abroad, widely favored sustained military actions against guerilla groups as a solution to the armed conflict. Another factor to consider is the state gaining—during this time—the political space to considerably increase investment of the national treasury in the war. At the same time, in 2000, financial support (about 1.3 billion U.S. dollars), equipment, and military assistance from the United States, known as Plan Colombia, further increased the capacity of the government's reaction to numerous and brutal attacks by insurgent groups.

The fourth period of the Colombian armed conflict falls between the years 2005 and 2012. This was the period of successful deployment of government military forces, which managed to change the dynamic of the war. The Colombian civilian population widely supported the government in its military actions against insurgent movements, yet became increasingly critical of state excesses, particularly the 2008 "false positive" scandal, discussed later in chapter 11. This was a time when some regional politicians and members of the armed forces joined together with paramilitary groups and took illegal actions against civilian populations viewed as excessively "friendly" toward the guerilla organizations. The military triumphs of the state forced the FARC-EP to return to guerilla warfare, all of which led to a significant decrease in the number of guerillas, resulting from a combination of combat deaths and/or the surrender of thousands of fighters to government forces. By 2010, there were approximately eight thousand members in the FARC-EP and an undetermined number of militias in the cities.

Of great importance during this period was the successful negotiation between the government and the paramilitary groups, the so-called United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). Through the Pact of Ralito, the nation oversaw the demobilization of more than thirty thousand combatants and the implementation of the Law of Justice and Peace (2005)—the legal mechanism that established agreements on demobilization, together with integration back to civilian society for (former) members of the paramilitary forces.

Finally, from the years 2012 to 2016, the critical fifth period of the armed conflict evolved. Late 2012 to the December 2016 represents the years of negotiations in Havana that led to the signing of peace accords on September 26, 2016, with the FARC; those agreements were renegotiated in November of the same year and finally passed through both chambers of the Colombian

Congress in late November 2016. Peace discussions with the ELN have restarted (as of October 2022) after several recent failed attempts to bring this particular, long-lasting insurgency to a negotiated settlement.

The September 26 agreement with the FARC was signed with great fanfare in Cartagena, as the world watched in anticipation of a true and meaningful peace to settle the fifty-two-year war. However, on October 2, 2016, the Colombian people went to the ballot box in a plebiscite and narrowly rejected the accords in a stunning setback to President Juan Manuel Santos and his Havana negotiating team. The direct effects of the conflict, as measured in killings, displacement, and massacres, fell dramatically with the onset of negotiations (beginning in late 2012); during the first ten months of 2016, for example, there were zero deaths due to the war with the FARC. However, the ELN is still active, and though peace talks began in earnest after Gustavo Petro assumed the presidency (in August 2022), that organization continues to carry out hostile actions against the national electrical and oil infrastructure.

THE PEACE PROCESSES IN HISTORIC PERSPECTIVE

For many years, Colombians have been actively trying to secure a durable peace to end decades of armed conflict, social insecurity, and losses, which, in terms of treasure, are calculated in billions of dollars, over generations. It is estimated that the conflict accounted for, annually, between 2 and 4 percent of total GDP,[2] money that could be diverted to improving education, repairing infrastructure, supporting the arts, and lifting more Colombians out of poverty.

Most Colombians grew tired of perpetual conflict. The FARC—once seen by their admirers as indefatigable fighters on behalf of the poor—lost a coherent ideology and resorted to financing their activities through extortion, kidnapping, and providing cover and protection to drug traffickers. For its part, the Colombian governments up to and through the Santos administration, rather than pursuing war, could have dedicated energies toward building a stronger economy and a more democratic society, while promoting Colombia's rich historic and cultural traditions abroad. Armed conflict proved to be a continuous drag on the Colombian economy, political structure, and spirit of the victims and perpetrators.

Yet the conflict became part of Colombia's daily life. Academicians and journalists in Colombia and abroad continue to study the conflict, and bookstores sell a seemingly infinite supply of new titles dealing with the topic.[3] In 2011, the telenovela *El Capo* aired a program dealing with the history of the Colombian drug trade that created composites of the various and infamous

Colombian drug kingpins. Wildly popular in Colombia and abroad, and broadcast in Latin America, Spain, and U.S. Hispanic markets, the series was renewed for a third season. On March 3, 2013, RCN Colombian television, in collaboration with MundoFox, rolled out a new series, *Tres Caínes* [Three Cains], based on the exploits of the Castaño brothers, Fidel, Carlos, and Vicente. The Castaños masterminded the organization of paramilitary forces that ravaged Colombia for decades, before finally dissolving, in 2005, into loosely linked criminal networks. The *narconovela* entertained millions in Colombia, and abroad, and demonstrated how easily violence is monetized. Violence sells, but it also distorts. What the *narconovela* could not reveal is a series of attempts to negotiate peace, rolled out over decades, beginning in the 1950s.

Most date contemporary peace plans in Colombia from the administration of Belisario Betancur, in the early 1980s. But thirty years before Betancur's ascension to the Colombian presidency, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (in 1953) organized a demobilization of some 6,500 guerillas of the eastern plains, Cundinamarca, the Middle Magdalena, Santander, Tolima, and other regions; negotiations at that time promised agrarian reform and a cessation of military operations against the insurgents. However, many of the leaders were killed, including Guadalupe Salcedo and Jacobo Prías Alape. These insurgencies did not subscribe to a single philosophy or ideology; for example, the eastern plains (*llanos orientales*) guerillas, led by Salcedo, were ardent members of the traditional Colombian Liberal Party and eventually formed "Soviets" in the *llanos*—or Marxist-Communist organizations. They fought, from 1946 to 1953, against conservative governments and paramilitary forces.

Alberto Lleras Camargo, the first president to rule under the elite-inspired National Front power-sharing arrangement that began in 1958, recognized the demobilization and amnesty (of 1958), but his government developed a deliberate, drawn-out amnesia regarding the deep social, cultural, and economic impetus behind insurgent organization in Colombia. Due to this instituted forgetting, the 1950s demobilization was neither complete nor efficacious, and widespread violence and social disorder broke out in areas where guerilla groups once operated, resulting in government-led repression. With the unrest, the FARC and the ELN and other guerilla groups grew stronger during the 1960s and 1970s, as pointed out above, and the first comprehensive, systematic attempt to negotiate a general peace did not emerge until the early 1980s, with the Betancur administration.

President Belisario Betancur secured the Agreement of La Uribe (1984), which represented an important peace accord between the government and the FARC. Social reforms, agrarian reform, and guarantees for reincorporation into civilian life were the main pillars of the agreement, and out of this

emerged a new political party—the Union Patriótica, or the UP. Hundreds of UP candidates (former insurgents who had turned in their weapons) were elected as mayors and town council members, and to other offices in small towns and municipalities throughout the national territory, but twin tragedies destroyed this peace initiative. First, the M-19, the urban guerilla group discussed above, founded in the early 1970s, orchestrated a dramatic takeover of the Supreme Court building in November 1985, which resulted in the destruction of the building and more than one hundred deaths. Second, a sinister, still largely unknown array of forces systematically targeted UP party leaders, and during a six- or seven-year period, roughly three thousand UP party members were killed in Colombia. Thus, by the end of 1985, the creative, serious Betancur peace initiative went up in smoke, and all three major guerilla organizations reorganized and returned to the field.

President Virgilio Barco (1986–1990) secured a peace agreement with the M-19. In 1990, some eight hundred members of the M-19 turned in their weapons and agreed to a general amnesty, and some of their militants, including Antonio Navarro Wolff and the current president of the Republic, Gustavo Petro, have become important national civilian leaders. But many in the M-19 leadership in the post-demobilization phase, including Carlos Pizarro, died violently. Pizarro was killed while campaigning for the 1990 Colombian presidency. Two other candidates—the establishment candidate, Luis Carlos Galán, and Bernardo Jaramillo (president of the UP, having ascended to that post after the 1987 murder of Jaime Pardo Leal, who ran for the Colombian presidency as the UP candidate in 1986)—were murdered during this campaign.

Out of the terrible carnage of the 1990 campaign, Cesár Gaviria Trujillo emerged as president of Colombia. A young economist with an economic development rather than peace agenda, Gaviria began restructuring the Colombian economy in a "neoliberal" direction. By refusing to support an extradition agreement with the United States for major drug traffickers, he unwittingly expanded and emboldened the illegal trade. Gaviria's government did oversee the demobilization of the small but significant armed insurgency in the southwest corner of the nation, the MAQL—the Quintín Lame Armed Movement, which joined civilian life in May 1991. During this time, the government successfully negotiated with other insurgent groups such as the EPL (the Popular Liberation Army) and the PRT (the Workers Revolutionary Party). Gaviria is remembered most fondly for his bold leadership in organizing a plebiscite that resulted in a Constitutional Assembly and the writing and ratification of a new Colombian Constitution in July 1991. The new charter harmonized the Colombian state and its political structure but mostly ignored the woefully inadequate and unequal agrarian configuration.

In 1994, a traditional Liberal candidate, Ernesto Samper, won the Colombian presidency, but his tenure in office was seriously compromised thanks to illegal "narco-dollars" infused into his campaign during its final days. Samper—perhaps to show he was no dupe of the Colombian drug lords—used an underfunded, underenthused, and overwhelmed Colombian military to pursue drug traffickers, which contrasted with the previous strategy of employing an increasingly corrupt and deficient national police force on the counternarcotics front. The military also engaged guerilla organizations and, to a lesser extent, the paramilitary forces. But Samper's weakened position at home and abroad, together with a contracting Colombian economy, meant that no serious peace talks emerged during that period.

Andrés Pastrana (1998–2002) made a serious but embarrassingly failed attempt to secure a peace accord with the FARC during his presidency. By 2000, the FARC had grown in strength and numbers. Colombians, tired of the conflict, wanted either a negotiated settlement or total eradication of the insurgency forces. While planning for peace, the president simultaneously planned for war by successfully seeking 1.3 billion dollars in mostly military aid from the United States in 2000—the so-called Plan Colombia. The Pastrana administration peace conversations took place in the rural, remote municipality of San Vicente de Caguán, in the Department of Caquetá—one of the principal municipalities that formed part of the infamous *despeje*, or demilitarized zone granted by the government to the FARC as a gesture of goodwill. The formal launch of talks began inauspiciously, when the leader of the FARC, Manuel Marulanda ("Tirofijo"), failed to show up as the president and his entourage waited, perspiring profusely under a tropical sun. Neither side, during the three years of negotiations, fully embraced peace: Pastrana used the time to build the military; the FARC used their assigned demilitarized zone to build up and solidify their forces. When the demilitarized zone was retaken by the Colombian military, on orders of Pastrana, the peace process officially came to an end, and an uncomfortable consensus emerged: the FARC leadership had outmaneuvered President Pastrana during a dramatic, drawn-out, three-year ballet that ended in personal disgrace for the president and national humiliation for Colombia.

The failure of Caguán led inexorably to the election in May 2002 of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, a political maverick who campaigned on total military victory against the leftist insurgents. Plan Colombia allowed Uribe to fortify and professionalize the Colombian armed forces. He imported a fleet of tactical, all-terrain helicopters from the United States and mothballed the fancy but ineffective French Mirage fighter jets of a former era. Uribe's "Plan Patrióta" was designed to push the guerilla forces into the nation's corners, corral them, and reduce their numbers with demonstrable "kills" that would show

the Colombian nation how the army, not the leftist insurgency, was winning the war.

For all the administration's bravado and blustery talk of total military victory, Colombians began to seriously doubt Uribe's handling of the war when the "false positive" scandal hit the nation in 2008. A sinister, murderous manipulation of the war's "body count," the scandal—described later in this book—forced Colombians to wonder about the efficacy of total military victory, and once again, they began discussing a negotiated settlement to the conflict. The false positive scandal nagged at the Uribe administration, embarrassed Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, and represented the beginning of an unraveling of Uribe's second administration.

President Uribe did make an agreement with the nation's paramilitary forces, the AUC, which resulted in the 2005 "Ley de Justicia y Paz," whereby the forces disbanded, publicly admitted to crimes, and received reduced sentences for their apparent transparency. The public airing of some of these crimes, massacres in many cases, shocked Colombians, and soon many politicians and prominent people (including close associates of the president) found themselves in hot water for having collaborated with the murderous paramilitary forces. Many of these people are currently serving jail time. The official disbanding of the AUC did not lead to national peace and harmony; in many regions of the nation, particularly on the north coast, the paramilitaries have stealthily rebranded themselves as criminal bands—the Bacrim. These criminal organizations hold de facto political influence and economic power in much of Colombia's national territory.

Uribe made a tepid attempt at negotiations with the FARC, but a sort of visceral, historic hatred for this group prevented him, or his administration, from seriously negotiating with the guerilla insurgents. President Uribe did reach out to Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez,[4] a man who had close ties to the FARC, and he attempted to use Chávez and leftist president Rafael Correa of Ecuador as interlocutors. But Uribe's overtures to his leftist neighbors collapsed in March 2008, when the Colombian army raided a camp in Ecuador and killed Raúl Reyes, the second in command of the FARC. A total of eighteen people were killed, including a Colombian soldier. This raid infuriated President Correa, President Chávez, and the Castro brothers in Havana, and led to a serious, simmering political crisis. It also marked the end of any sort of a negotiated settlement between the Uribe administration and the leftist FARC.

Juan Manuel Santos's election to the Colombian presidency in 2010 cleared the path for a fresh approach to Colombia's stalled peace process. Santos understood the conflict's regional dimensions, and, upon assuming the presidency in August of that year, he immediately normalized relations

with presidents Chávez and Correa. Exploratory peace talks were leaked in early 2012, and shortly thereafter, in November, talks began in Havana, Cuba.

THE FUTURE

An understanding of the vast differences between those who support or disapprove of the agreement negotiated in Havana, and the triumph of the "No" campaign in the plebiscite of October 2, 2016, is based on some definition deficiencies. Are members of the FARC mere criminals or are they legitimate political actors? Therefore, it is difficult for Colombians to unanimously agree on how much the government should yield to the opponent as a condition of their laying down weapons. As explained at the beginning of this chapter, the length of the conflict means that the causes, actors—the interpretations—of the war change over time. This has affected all peace talks with the FARC, including the most recent Havana talks, because the more radical opponents of the negotiated settlement (led by former president of Colombia Álvaro Uribe Vélez) do not accept there *ever* was a sociopolitical conflict against the state; they view the FARC and their allies as mere "terrorists." The more moderate opponents of the peace accords believe that FARC leaders committed crimes that must be punished without exception.

There are currently at least five different explanations of the Colombian armed conflict, with the FARC as its main protagonist for many years. On one hand, there are those who understand the armed conflict is the product of structural problems in the nation that have yet to be resolved: deep social inequity, political exclusion, and economic inequality. This reality does not justify the war, but it helps us to understand the eventuality generated by such sustained, historic structural conditions.

On the other hand, there are those who believe that the root of the social problem is the expulsion of *campesinos* from their lands and the increasing concentration of rural property in the hands of a select few, carried out with the aim of developing massive agroindustry in the nation. Third, others have formulated the thesis that the change in the mode of financing the war by the rebel groups forced them to "forget" their initial ideals of social change, transforming them from social idealists to simple criminals; those who follow this line of thinking earnestly believe the end of the war can only come about through decisions made in civil courts of the nation. Fourth, some others support the thesis that the armed conflict in Colombia has generated links between the actions of the guerillas and the paramilitary groups, since the two sectors act in similar ways: they both hope to control, via military strategies, the zones where new wealth, such as mining, petroleum, exportable

agricultural products, and, of course, cocaine, generate resources not only to finance their actions but to justify political redistributive actions among the people who live in those territories. Finally, there are those with great economic and political power in the nation who understand the conflict as a fight against terrorism—they simply deny the existence of legitimate insurgent groups and define the guerillas as dangerous criminals who must be hunted down and eliminated.[5]

Except for this final position, which essentially denies the existence of the conflict, we can argue that the agreement in Havana in August 2016 (and refined in October/November of the same year) was in some ways politically interpreted in accordance with the four theses enunciated in the previous paragraph. Faced with this situation, the six central topics covered by the Havana agreement can be summarized as follows: First, the FARC-EP and the Colombian government agreed to comprehensive agricultural reform, because the FARC-EP always argued that a central cause of the armed conflict involved their historic, limited access to productive land, and the resultant historical marginalization of the Colombian peasantry. Second, in Havana, there was an agreement on broad and inclusive political participation for all Colombians, not just the wealthy and urban. Limited political participation has, historically, undermined the effectiveness of Colombian democracy, which requires a place for the opposition and ought to offer political participation even for those who have made war to break the grip that has, historically, kept the elites in control of the political apparatus of Colombia; third, there was broad agreement to ending the conflict through a cessation of armed actions and the demobilization of all guerilla fronts; fourth, the need for a solution to the problem of illicit drugs, in particular drug trafficking, making a serious attempt at crop substitution as the strategy that will benefit peasant communities; fifth, the recognition of the millions of victims and the commitment of the perpetrators not to repeat their actions, to recognize the truth of what they have done, and to repair the damage caused; and sixth, the validation of the agreement and its implementation in accordance with the provisions of this same peace agreement.

In this way, despite differing interpretations of what was agreed to in Havana, a future where this conflict continues is neither socially nor politically viable. The search for a solution focused only on the military defeat of the insurgent groups lacks the support of the majority in Colombia. The guerilla forces were diminished but never defeated on the battlefield; thus, the Colombian people are unwilling to continue funding a war that for decades has produced only victims, insecurity, and poverty.

The negotiated peace accords between the Colombian government and the FARC demonstrated that Colombians can agree to a peaceful conclusion to

one of their most entrenched and tenacious conflicts. In this sense, despite the political defeat of those accords in the plebiscite of October 2, 2016, since that date, many citizens' marches and pronouncements demanded a quick, but negotiated, solution to the war. Likewise, and reaffirming the trend in terms of broad support from foreign communities and governments for a peace agreement, the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos.

On Saturday, November 12, 2016, a "new" final agreement was reached in Havana between the Santos government and the FARC-EP, and by November 30, the agreement had passed through both chambers of the Colombian Congress. This long but negotiated settlement to the fifty-four-year conflict with the FARC has encouraged the other important armed insurgency, the ELN, to press ahead with peace talks that began, once again, in October 2022. The ELN leadership realized that the political agreement with the FARC ended any real chance for them to maintain a war footing—with the FARC disappearing from the battlefield, the ELN's options dramatically diminished, as they became the sole military target of the Colombian armed forces. However, the ELN leadership does not exert complete control over midlevel field commanders, and this has led to erratic and unpredictable decisions/actions. Finally, it is inevitable to assume that any final agreement with the FARC and the ELN will lead to dissatisfaction for some political groups in the country. The Havana agreements (which constitute nearly three hundred pages of small-font text) cannot and did not please all, in Colombia, or outside the nation.

The November 12, 2016, revision offered two major concessions to the vocal critics who managed to deliver a majority of "No" votes during the October 2 plebiscite. The new final accord forces the insurgents to forfeit all ill-begotten wealth and turn those funds over to victims. There was agreement, in the new final accord, that the constitution would not be adjusted to incorporate the peace accords. The FARC had requested this as a way of "hardening" the agreement to prevent future governments from tampering with the terms of the accords. The one area where the insurgents held firm involved participation in the political process; this means that former leaders will be able to run for office throughout the nation, and they are still guaranteed five seats in each chamber in future election cycles. Of the fifty-seven objections to the original agreement, the FARC-EP leadership conceded to all except this final issue of participation in the political process.

We know Colombians are tired of decades of war and want to live in peace. Starting conflict is relatively easy; creating durable, stable, true peace that strengthens the nation and builds up the total capacity of all Colombians is the existential challenge of the Petro government, future governments, and

the Colombian people. Creative, negotiated settlements to seemingly intractable political challenges represent the way forward for Colombia, and for all civilized nations.

NOTES

1. All data in this chapter is from the following bibliographic sources: Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, ¡Basta Ya! *Colombia: memorias de guerra y dignidad. Informe general. Grupo de memoria Histórica*, Bogotá, 2013; Andrés Dávila Ladrón de Guevara, Gustavo Salazar Arbeláez y Alexander González-Chavarría, eds., *El conflicto en contexto. Un análisis en cinco regiones colombianas, 1998–2014* (Bogotá: Editorial Javeriana, 2016). This section was updated using new figures released on 28 June 2022, in Bogotá. The 895-page report is entitled "Hay futuro si hay verdad: informe final." By Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la no Repetición. See analysis of this report in Rachel Nolan, *LRB* (*London Review of Books*), "Sixty Years On," Vol. 44, No. 20, 20 October 2022.

2. Colombia's GDP was 331 billion U.S. dollars in 2011.

3. Examples include Stephen Ferry, *Violentología: un manual del conflicto Colombiano*, and Mario Alejandro Molano and Elkin Rubiano, eds., *La violencia en Colombia según Fernando Botero: consideraciones, historiogáfica, estética y semióticas.* Both books, published in 2012, deal with the violence graphically, one through Ferry's photographs, the other through Botero's paintings and drawings. See also Comisión Histórica del conflicto y sus víctimas, *Contribución al entendimiento del conflicto armado en Colombia* (Bogotá: Ediciones desde abajo, 2015). Colombians have, for the past few years, been writing about "postconflict": see, for example, León Valencia and Ariel Ávila, *Los retos del postconflicto* (Bogotá: Ediciones B Colombia, S.A., marzo, 2016). See our bibliography for the most recent publications.

4. President Chávez died in office in March 2013.

5. Universidad del Rosario. Grupo Estudios sobre la identidad (ESI), *las explicaciones sobre el conflicto armado en Colombia*, Bogotá. Programa de divulgación científica, fascículo, 9.

Chapter Seven

Economic Unity

The contemporary Colombian economy is a modern, diverse, market-driven economy, managed by an entrepreneurial sector of the nation's elite. During the second half of the twentieth century, the economy avoided the disruptive boom-bust cycles of its Latin American neighbors, most notably Venezuela, Argentina, and Brazil. However, in 1999, the economy fell into a great recession that crippled the construction sector, devastated manufacturing, and pushed people out of agriculture. The recession was characterized by an unemployment rate of more than 20 percent, resulting in social disruption, an increase in crime rates, and a general sense, at the end of the twentieth century, that Colombia was on the verge of becoming a "failed state." Economic recovery began at the beginning of the twenty-first century—thanks partially to the infusion of billions of U.S. dollars in mostly military aid via "Plan Colombia," approved in 2000. Economic troubles presented, with a vengeance, during the COVID-19 crisis. In 2020 the Colombian economy shrank by about 7 percent of the GDP, but the economy (thanks in large measure to a rise in worldwide crude oil prices) is expected to add about 6 percent to the GDP by the end of 2022. More information on the post-COVID economy is explored in chapter 13.

Despite the recovery, Colombia remains one of the most unequal societies in Latin America and the world. The Gini coefficient, which measures household inequality, grew from 53.8 percent to 58.5 percent during a ten-year period from 1998 to 2008. It declined to 53.5 percent by 2013. In 2022, the coefficient had declined further, to 51.3 percent. Yet Ecuador recorded a Gini coefficient of 45.7 percent, and Uruguay, 39.7 percent (for 2022).[1] Approximately 27.8 percent of the Colombian population of forty-six million people lived in poverty in 2015 (according to DANE, the official governmental entity which collects and analyzes social statistics), a significant drop

from 2008, when 42 percent of the Colombian population lived in poverty. In 2020, Colombian poverty numbers increased, thanks to COVID restrictions, to about 42.5 percent of the population of fifty million but fell to 39.3 percent a year later, in 2021.

Production in contemporary Colombia has not met the needs of the Colombian population, a trend that dates back to colonial times. The twenty-first-century economy depends on exportation of petroleum and other mineral resources such as emeralds, coal, and gold; manufacturing, especially textiles, paper, and books; and agricultural products, including cut flowers, rice, cotton, sugar, and tobacco. Processed cocaine is another important export from Colombia, but it represents the "off-the-books" segment of economic activity, the informal sector. Much economic activity in Colombia is informal, untaxed, and unregulated, and this blending of formal and informal sectors is an intrinsic part of Colombia's economic flow. Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, the Colombian economy came to depend on the export sector to generate wealth for those who controlled land and labor, yet a dynamic domestic economy emerged and alternated—for decades—with the export sector for dominance: the "debate" over which segment of the economy would prevail led, in large part, to civil war—the War of a Thousand Days, from 1899 to 1902. Disagreements over economic policy have had deep, long-lasting, and at times devastating influences on Colombian society.

COLONIAL COLOMBIA COMPARED

During Latin America's colonial period (1500–1800, approximately), the territory known today as Colombia was poor, compared to its wealthy neighbors to the north and south, Mexico and Peru, respectively. Massive silver deposits became the basis of the Spanish overseas economy, and Colombian precious metal deposits, by comparison to those of nearby colonies, were modest. The Colombian mining sector, based mostly on placer (or riverbed) mining of gold, developed in the western area of the territory, in what today is known as the Departments of Antioquia, Chocó, Cauca, and Nariño. A steady stream of gold was discovered and mined, leading to settlement, commerce, and trade in the western part of the country, but Colombia never came close to matching the economic activity generated by Mexican or Peruvian silver deposits. In the case of upper Peru (modern-day Bolivia), there was literally a mountain of silver, known as Potosí, which created enormous wealth during the mid-sixteenth through early seventeenth century. Colombia's economic growth, from colonial times to the present, can be characterized as gradual

and moderate, with a mixed, mostly extractive economy. The architectural splendor, the vast fortunes made from mining and ranching, and the opulence and social dynamics resulting from the mining windfall in Mexico and Peru never materialized in Colombia. So, the colonial economy of what today is called Colombia was characterized by modesty, leading to risk-averse behavior, conservative investment patterns, and policies that can be seen as prudent rather than exuberant and irrational. One of the great paradoxes of the contemporary Colombian economy is centered on this exact historical irony: despite the alarming figures of economic inequality, which permits maybe a third of the population to survive at or below the poverty level, Colombia is viewed by classically trained Western economists as a stable, modern, prudently managed economy.

The capital city of Bogotá, high up in the Andes and isolated from a major river-port system, influenced the subsequent trajectory of the colonial Colombian economy. Bogotá was firmly integrated into the local Andean economy, and trade in foodstuffs and other agricultural products from the interior, including warmer-weather products such as tobacco and cotton, shaped the internal Colombian economy more than trans-Atlantic trade. The port cities of Cartagena and Portobello were major centers of human trafficking during the colonial period; enslaved Africans were sold at these markets in exchange for American silver and other minerals and agricultural products. In Colombia, the coastal economy—based at Cartagena—operated in concert with the demands of external markets; the interior economy, based in the highland cities of Bogotá, Socorro in the modern Department of Santander, and Popayán to the south, depended on an internal circulation of goods and products that originated in the soils and workshops of Colombia. The Magdalena River, which drains the Colombian Andes and flows northward to the city of Barranquilla and the Caribbean Sea, integrated the two economies. But the difficulty of travel on the Magdalena—the average trip from Cartagena to Bogotá lasted about a month during the colonial period—meant that true economic integration would remain elusive for Colombia, and so a dual economic system, one based on coastal patterns of trade and external markets, and another based on long-established networks dating to the Muisca pre-Columbian civilizations, developed and functioned. Technological innovations of the nineteenth century (for example, the steamship and the railroad) would pull these economies together, and twentieth-century aviation would more thoroughly break down the coastal-interior economic divide. Local economies of scale, based on geographic realities, fostered production and trade patterns that remained functional for decades and established a production paradigm characterized by slow, careful, conservative economic development.

MONOPOLY AND ECONOMY, 1750–1850

During the late colonial period, beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, the so-called Bourbon Reforms attempted to control economic activity in the colonies more completely via new policies originating in Spain. These policies were designed to collect more taxes, stimulate economic activity, and cut down on corruption. Monopoly control of certain segments of the Colombian economy characterized Bourbon policy during this time. Given the limited amount of income that could be generated through direct extraction of minerals or foodstuffs, Spanish policy in New Granada decreed that Spain would directly control production, marketing, and the sale of certain key products to include tobacco and *aguardiente* (cane liquor). The tobacco monopoly irritated the people of New Granada and was a source of tension pitting Americans against their overseas rulers.

At this time, the Spanish and British both looked for new revenue streams to finance costly wars, and their policies were remarkably similar. They increased revenue by raising taxes on overseas subjects, tried to restrict trade and prevent the flow of contraband by enforcing trade monopolies, and raised the prices on controlled goods that colonists needed. In the case of the British at Boston, the products in question were stamps, paper, and tea; in the Spanish New Granadian case, the tobacco and *aguardiente* tax increase seem to have overstepped the bounds of what was acceptable. Santander, Colombia, with its mild climate at 1,200 meters above sea level, represented an ideal growing environment for tobacco, and well-watered valleys created small land parcels that proved perfect for tobacco cultivation. High-quality tobacco came from this area of Colombia, and in a time period prior to cinema, television, or the surgeon general, tobacco was a critical recreational and social accelerant for people from all socioeconomic strata. One of the most important rebellions in northern South America would occur as a direct result of a tax hike on tobacco, the 1781 Comuneros Rebellion of New Granada.

The Comuneros Rebellion began in Socorro, Santander, and ended in Zipaquirá, the salt-mining town a mere day's journey from the capital at Bogotá. The rebellion showed Spaniards that people were growing weary of paying high taxes for the privilege of living as colonial subjects. Scholars have debated the degree to which the rebellion is an early cry for independence, but it did force a reconsideration of tax and monopoly policies and gave the people of New Granada encouragement that they could, in fact, organize and pressure a distant government concerning matters of production and taxation. The Comuneros revolt is widely considered an early tax rebellion, not an early outcry for independence; it has more in common with the earlier Boston "Tea Party" in faraway New England and less in common with the Tupác

Amaru Rebellion (1780–1781) in the Peruvian highlands. Tupác Amaru, a far more complicated rebellion, pitted Peruvian *mestizos* against the indigenous people and the Church against royal authorities and ended with a violent suppression of indigenous cultural expression.

The long, difficult, and disruptive Latin American wars of independence (1810–1826) dramatically set back the Latin American economies, especially in Mexico and Peru, where silver mining activities ground to a virtual halt. In Colombia, where most production was local and supported a regional economic structure, the dislocation was less apparent. David Bushnell estimates that gold mining fell by approximately 40 percent but notes that mining quickly recovered with the conclusion of the wars, since Colombian gold mining (unlike silver mining in Mexico) was river-based, low-tech placer mining.[2]

Political independence did not imply a radical or dramatic restructuring of the Colombian economy; in fact, economically speaking, Colombia changed very little with the onset of political independence from Spain. The new government provisionally abolished the hated *alcabala* (sales tax), long associated with Spanish abuse, and government revenues were raised through the continuance of monopolies on tobacco and salt. Customs receipts made up a significant percentage, perhaps as much as one-third, of national revenues during this time, but Colombia's rugged mountainous terrain prevented the development of an internal economic network; in Colombia, there was no symbolic economic unification of the nation, as was the case in the United States with the linking of the transcontinental train line in 1877. Colombians had to creatively adapt to their surroundings and grow, produce, and trade locally; in the highlands, especially, they could not depend on or afford imported luxury goods, and most Colombians lived an extremely austere existence, shaped by the confluence of geography and climate. In the Colombian lowlands, cotton and sugar were produced for export, but the levels were minimal compared to cotton exports from the United States (especially after the Civil War) or Cuba and Brazil (in terms of sugar production). Tobacco was an important product that spanned the colonial and independence period, and Colombian quinine, produced from the bark of the cinchona tree (found in the highlands of Colombia and other South American nations) and used to treat malaria, grew in commercial significance, especially after midcentury. This so-called quinine boom lasted about thirty years.

It would be inaccurate to write that transportation confounded Colombians. The reality is more complex and since, historically, most of the pre-Columbian, precapitalist people of the territory thrived in high-altitude plateaus and mountain valleys, modern production, accumulation, and trade would have to adapt to the rigors of mountainous geography. Colombian

economic development should not be compared to that of other countries during the same time period, especially those nations blessed with abundant natural resources, significant navigable river systems integrated with clear growing seasons, or easily navigable plains—much like the United States, Canada, or Argentina. Scholars have used words such as *divided* and *fragmented* to describe a Colombian economic (and social) reality, and those terms certainly apply when comparing Colombia to the United States' economic development of roughly the same historical time period. Colombians learned how to adapt, improvise, and create, and they did so through agricultural practices and production for domestic markets of basic necessities (clothing, footwear, and household goods, among others). They also developed inter- and intraregional trade patterns that proved durable and functional. The durability of these economic patterns is remarkable: for example, today, cotton, tobacco, rice, sugar, and *panela* (an artisanal molasses-based sweetener used in candies and beverages) are grown and processed in the same regions and—in the case of *panela*—in the same manner as they were hundreds of years ago.

What has changed, of course, is transportation networks, and the advent of modern aviation has significantly diminished the challenges imposed by geography on Colombia's economic development. Before aviation, however, Colombians faced the challenge of taming the mighty Magdalena River, which flows out of the Andes to the Caribbean Sea. Infrastructure developed at mid-century, especially during the regime of General Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, who is credited with building modern roads and introducing steam navigation on the Magdalena River. Modern steam freighter service on this river provided a much-needed link between the highlands and the Caribbean and allowed Colombians to imagine a dynamic export system, supported by the massive Magdalena, which, like the Mississippi farther north in the United States, profoundly shaped trade, commerce, and economic development in the Andean nation.

Mid-nineteenth-century economic activity, then, centered on regional production and trade of mineral products (gold), salt, tobacco, and cotton; the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the continuation of tobacco and mining and the introduction of quinine as a significant factor for the Colombian economy. But by the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, one product would come to dominate and define the Colombian economy and help establish the basis of a modern, fully articulated economic system: coffee. Coffee would help link the rural growing sector with the financial and transportation sector in the cities. Banking and international trade would grow as coffee came to overshadow, in terms of revenue, all other segments of the Colombian economy.

COFFEE

Coffee emerged in the late nineteenth century as the leading export from Colombia. It helped transform the nation, even though, like export booms in other regions of Latin America at this time (that is, wheat and fresh meat from Argentina, copper from Chile, and coffee from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Brazil), reliance on one product that was tied to overseas tastes and markets would generate uneven, unsustainable economic growth. In the case of Colombia, it would lead to a bitterly fought civil war, aptly named the War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902). American historian Charles Bergquist was the first scholar to connect coffee and the export-led economic model with political conflict in his 1986 book *Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886–1910*. He notes how the war, which took the lives of between seventy thousand and ninety thousand Colombians and represented an ideological conflict, turned particularly violent due in large part to an inability among elites to reach consensus concerning the future economic direction of the nation. Those who dominated the Conservative political party were more concerned with the local economy, farming, cattle raising, and the traditional *latifundia* (large-scale landholding) model. Political Liberals were pushing for infrastructural development, finance, and banking modifications that would allow them to pursue an export-based economic model based largely on cultivation, distribution, and exportation of coffee. The war was complicated: it pitted Liberals against Conservatives, coastal residents against citizens from the Andean interior, the landed elite against people with little or no land. Taxation, once again, was a primary factor leading to war in Colombia: the imposition of the 1895 government tax on exports came at a time when overproduction of coffee, on a world scale, resulted in declining profits for Colombian coffee growers and a general sour mood in the country. Neither the Conservatives (who controlled virtually all the official apparatus of the government) nor the insurgent Liberals actually won the war, which all but dissipated by 1902, resulting in a bitter stalemate.

Ironically, what eventually brought the country back together, so to speak, was the so-called separation of Panama, which occurred in 1903. Colombia was so utterly divided by its civil war that an outside power, the United States, was able to foment an independence movement in the Province of Panama during this time. After the bloodless revolt that led to the independence of Panama, the United States quickly recognized the new republic. Colombians did not exactly forget the tensions that led them to a thousand-day civil war, but a much more powerful adversary to the north helped Colombians to refocus their internal animosities toward an external target—an aggressive, undiplomatic United States. A similar, though not exactly analogous,

sentiment could be seen in Mexico after the ambiguously named Mexican–American War (1846–1848), which led to Mexico's losing 51 percent of its national territory and demonstrated the urgent need for political collaboration, at home, to avoid further territorial dismemberment.

By the end of the nineteenth century, according to David Bushnell, coffee represented about half of all export earnings for the nation; by the mid-1920s, after the economic and social dislocation occasioned by the First World War, coffee represented 80 percent of all Colombian foreign earnings, and about 90 percent of all coffee exports went to one place: the United States. Colombia's privileged geographic position allowed easy access to the U.S. market. Colombian geography gave it a comparative advantage over other nations in Latin America for growing and exporting coffee. The coffee bush grows best at a temperate, frost-free climate found in Colombian mountain valleys, particularly in the western part of the country, in the so-called coffee zone, comprising the departments of Antioquia, Risaralda, Tolima, Caldas, and Quindio. A patchwork of railroad investment, especially in Antioquia, supported the coffee economy, and small-scale producers came to define the Colombian model, wherein families would work together to grow coffee for export and staples (beans, cassava, and plantains, among other products) for home consumption.

Coffee production, which is extremely labor intensive, returned more revenues to the middlemen and merchants than to the farmers. In 1927, as a way to control the production and marketing of the most vital product of the nation in terms of foreign exchange, the Federación Nacional de Cafeteros (National Federation of Coffee Growers) was organized by powerful coffee growers to regulate production, harmonize trade, provide credit, and look after the interests of producers and merchants alike. This organization, which still exists, represented a creative, modern attempt to regularize and balance the economy of Colombia and bring unity to a country and economy that defies unification. Naturally, as pointed out by Bushnell, this organization was dominated by the large growers and merchants, but the creation of the federation ushered in a period of economic planning, collaboration, and cooperation that is rarely emphasized when discussing contemporary Colombian economic development.[3]

Thus, during the first two decades of the twentieth century, coffee came to define the Colombian economy. Coffee production had shifted west and remained in the hands of small-scale producers, and profits from the coffee economy remained largely in Colombia. This helped stimulate early industrialization, which took root at Medellín—the capital of the Department of Antioquia—in the center of the nation's coffee region. Another factor that spurred industrial development was the 1922 indemnification payment by the

United States, which was used mostly to modernize transportation networks. The result of negotiations that had led to the 1914 Urrutia-Thomson Treaty between the two nations, this payment of twenty-five million dollars was designed to compensate Colombia for the loss of Panama in 1903. As examined later in this chapter, the indemnification funds were just a small percentage of the millions of dollars that flowed into the nation during the 1920s in the form of loans, overseen by the national, departmental and municipal governments to push forward infrastructure projects.

A significant year in Colombia, 1914 represents the time when frozen U.S.-Colombian relations began to thaw; this is partially due to the opening of the Panama Canal during that year, shortly after the outbreak of the First World War. Colombian president Pedro Nel Ospina (1922–1926) was the sitting president who most benefited from the indemnity funds and used the money to promote public works projects. Many of these projects involved transportation, construction of railroad lines, and other infrastructure improvements designed to facilitate the movement of goods and to support overall economic growth. In 1923, reflecting a new spirit of friendship between the United States and Colombia, the Banco de la República (Central Bank) was established upon the recommendation of the Kemmerer Mission, an economic advisory council from the United States that sought to help Colombia regulate and modernize banking, finances, investment, and interest rate schedules during the heady days of soaring coffee profits.

However, historians date the initial rebirth of U.S.-Colombia commercial and diplomatic relations to the presidency of Marco Fidel Suárez (1918–1921); President Suárez was a firm believer in linking the economic fortunes of Colombia to what he called a *respice polum*, or the "Polar Star"—represented (according to his reasoning) by the United States. But a two-tiered internal tension limited the extent to which the U.S.-Colombian commercial relationship would grow: on the one hand, a significant trade imbalance existed, since most manufactured goods arrived at the north coast of Colombia from Europe, while Colombia relied heavily on the U.S. market for its exports (principally coffee); this meant that U.S. influence over the Colombian economy was limited. On the other hand, credit and investment flowed to Colombia mostly from the United States during the 1920s when U.S. banks, bursting with post–World War I investment capital, were eager to advance loans and credit in the Americas.

In addition to this economic reality, Suárez's gaze toward the Polar Star was fraught with cultural tension; he was a man deeply influenced by a nineteenth-century Catholic ethos that viewed U.S. Protestant-style capitalist-industrialist development with great skepticism. The Church frequently warned about capitalist excesses and worried that it would lose its flock to

secular labor unions, political parties, and industrialists from abroad. Marco Palacios summarizes Suárez's dilemma by presciently noting how "this recipe of Catholic social doctrine and Yankee progress would put its stamp on 'progressive conservatives' for the rest of the century."[4]

THE PERCOLATING TWENTIES

The 1920s' "dance of the millions"—the name given to the decade of prosperity ushered in by the dramatic increase in coffee exports and foreign loans taken by Colombia (when Colombians began to think in terms of millions rather than hundreds of thousands of pesos)—was characterized by increased foreign capitalist penetration of the Colombian economy, most notably by the United States. The north coast of Colombia became the primary focus for cultivation of exotic tropical fruits, at this time primarily bananas. The United Fruit Company (UFCO) had developed a virtual enclave economy in and around Santa Marta and managed the growing, harvesting, and transportation of bananas out of Colombia to the North American markets. UFCO also operated plantations in Caribbean and Central American nations.

In 1928, Colombian banana workers staged a strike, which is seen as a watershed moment in the nation's economic history. UFCO employees executed a work stoppage that brought UFCO operations to a halt in late 1928. As many as twenty-five thousand workers struck for better working conditions and for a greater share of company profits to be returned to them as actual wages rather than worthless (outside the banana zone) company scrip. UFCO management, frightened by the prospect of ripening and rotting fruit in the Caribbean sun, called on the Colombian government to take action, which resulted in a massacre at the main plaza in Ciénaga. Workers had gathered at this town, organizing to march to the departmental capital, Santa Marta, but the workers were mowed down in an extraordinary show of brutality that officially left forty-seven dead. However, most estimates put the number of actual dead that day at between one thousand and two thousand. The massacre was immortalized in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, an account of magic and madness at Macondo—the town he invented to parallel the town where he grew up, Aracataca—in the middle of the banana zone, and about fifty miles south of Santa Marta. García Márquez used the number three thousand to refer to the dead in his account, and that number has come to define the magnitude of the December 6, 1928, tragedy—though most agree that his is an outsized statistic. García Márquez, reflecting on the centrality of fiction to help explain history in Colombia, commented on the strongman he created in one of his earliest novels: "In *The*

Autumn of the Patriarch, the dictator says that it doesn't matter if it's not true now, because sometime in the future it will be true. Sooner or later people believe writers rather than the government."[5]

The 1928 massacre at Ciénaga presented a contradiction that was not lost on the Colombian political elite or ordinary Colombian citizens: while the wealthy were dancing and thinking in millions, an important segment of Colombia's new export economy had, in essence, fallen into the hands of foreign subsidiaries, and the nation's poor were being massacred. Colombians energetically organized after this date to take back control of their economy and reconsider their economic and political future. This nationalist impulse helped launch the career of a new political star, the young Bogotano lawyer Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, who advocated on behalf of the massacre victims in a series of noisy, sensationalistic public speeches that also forcefully criticized the economic practices and policies of UFCO, its U.S. backers, and its Colombian allies. In 1930, the Conservative Party, which had held power since about 1886, was swept from power in national elections that brought the Liberal Party to power; people in Colombia had grown disenchanted with economic policies and conditions that favored outside corporations' profits over the lives of Colombian citizens, and the 1928 Ciénaga massacre is seen as the beginning of the end of a forty-five-year Conservative political hegemony.

OIL AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

Oil during the 1920s became an increasingly important export from Colombia and is currently its leading export. Since 1948, a state-run oil company, Ecopetrol, has managed the development, drilling, production, and distribution of oil in the country, and contracts are granted by the company to outside oil companies. The excesses of the banana plantation economy, completely monopolized by one company and one nation, led to nationalization, control, and protection of precious, profitable national resources—such as oil—though Ecopetrol, S.A., was partially privatized in 2003 through the sale of shares on the Colombian stock exchange. Colombia is petroleum self-sufficient and exports oil to nations in the region, but its reserves are minimal compared to those of neighbouring Venezuela—a nation where roughly 25 percent of the entire nation's GDP is tied to the production and exportation of oil through a state-run oil monopoly, Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A., or PdVSA. But Colombian reserves are dwindling and could, in the absence of further investment in the hydrocarbon sector, lose its self-sufficient status by the end of the decade.

During the fifteen-year period marked by the Great Depression and the Second World War, the Colombian economy continued to export coffee, and by the late 1940s, coffee represented about 72 percent of all exports. Careful, prudent management under the umbrella organization of the Coffee Growers Federation created the conditions for Colombian coffee exports to continue during the difficult depression years. In 1931, Colombians organized the Caja de Crédito Agrario (Agrarian Credit Bank) to offer loans to small producers and keep them afloat during the capital-scarce 1930s. Colombians took advantage of their diverse, regionally based economy to weather the storm, and like other neighboring Latin American nations, they began to rethink their economy and restructure it toward the domestic sector. Economic and political havoc in the United States and Europe (the Great Depression and Second World War) mitigated against a robust international trade at this time, so Colombian industry shifted toward producing for the internal market. Textile manufacturing, based at the industrial center of Medellín, took the lead in the Colombian industrialization plan. The nation also excelled at producing paper, books, clothing, shoes, and household items—particularly furniture—and all of these manufactured goods contributed to the nascent industrialization process, which would grow under the protection of favorable tariff rates and, of course, limited competition from foreign producers.

The conclusion of the Second World War brought, to Latin America in general and to Colombia specifically, higher prices for commodities that had been under price-control regulations during the war: thus, sugar, cotton, coffee, and minerals fetched excellent prices on the world market, and the price of coffee in the postwar period reached an all-time high. Colombia's GDP grew by 5 percent per year from 1945 to 1955 despite the onset of uncontrollable rural violence, and demonstrating the degree to which the Colombian economy has managed to push forward, despite major obstacles found along the path. During this period, the economy was managed by moderate bureaucrats wedded to free-market principles with conservative management styles. An example is President Mariano Ospina Pérez, an avuncular, bland businessman who ruled from 1946 to 1950 and was followed by proto-fascist Laureano Gómez, who ruled until his ouster by the military in 1953.

General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla's regime (1953–1957) was characterized by state intervention in labor matters. The military dictator committed to some high-profile projects to develop the country's infrastructure. He helped build the modern El Dorado Airport at Bogotá, the headquarters of the Ministry of Defense, and the new military hospital in the capital, and he largely stuck to the free-market system favored by the elites and their allies. His regime was marred by a declining price in coffee, and his enthusiasm for labor organization frightened more conservative segments of society. Rojas Pinilla

was ousted in 1957 through a national civic strike, and a military junta ruled until the 1958 elections. Thus, in the twentieth century, it is accurate to note that the military interceded only once, in 1953, when General Rojas Pinilla removed Laureano Gómez from the presidency. Colombians, unlike Argentines, Chileans, or Brazilians, have shown an aversion to military rule, and part of Rojas's problem with governability was the widely held perception that something was not quite right about his unelected government. Colombians have preferred civilian chief executives, and while tolerating a lot of back-room, behind-the-scenes negotiating (such as that which led to Rojas's coup against Gómez), they have regularly gone to the polls to elect civilians to higher office.

THE NATIONAL FRONT

From 1958 to 1974, Colombia's political elites came together and shared political power. Pointing to the economic significance of this period, historian Marco Palacios describes the National Front as "the golden age of gentlemen's agreements between the leadership of the state and the quasi-corporative trade associations."[6] The cohesiveness of Colombian trade associations, which defended the interests of coffee growers, cattle ranchers, merchants, industrialists, bankers, and others, demonstrates the value placed on sociopolitical stability as a means of realizing profits for Colombian business managers. Economic modernization was a central concern during this period, and openness to the free market, together with prudent management by technocrats and elites (many of whom were trained in the United States) and periodic currency devaluations, made Colombia an appealing economic partner to the United States during the escalating Cold War, a crisis that grew more intense after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. The Colombian economy became fully integrated into the capitalist economic orbit led by the free market priorities of the United States. President John F. Kennedy made Colombia a priority in his plan for hemispheric unity called the Alliance for Progress; Colombia was viewed as an economically stable, democratically inclined nation, and President and Mrs. Kennedy's visit to Bogotá in 1961 represented a critical turning point for Colombia in its self-image as an important player on the world stage.

The National Front political arrangement included a sixteen- to twenty-year economic plan for Colombia based on industrialization. The Colombian business elite did not want to be assigned their historical role of mere producers of primary commodities (coffee and oil, emeralds and bananas); Colombian industry during this time widened to include areas of Bogotá, the north coast, Cali, and Medellín. For example, from 1969 to the present, Colombia

has assembled automobiles for the domestic market under an agreement with Renault of France. The plant is located in Envigado, a suburb of Medellín.

However, French automobiles rolling off Colombian assembly lines hid a larger, growing, historic problem in the Colombian countryside. From the late 1920s, the agricultural model in Colombia was designed to privilege a growing agro-industrial sector, which led to the abandonment of the traditional *campesino*, that is, small-scale agricultural producer. This created a major migratory process from the countryside to the cities—not only in Colombia but in other Latin American nations as well. The postwar economy stimulated this process, as did Colombian rural conflict in the 1950s–1960s. While some small landholders struggled to retain their lands by organizing into powerful insurgency forces (such as the FARC), other *campesinos* not disposed to joining the fight fled to the major cities. Unable to find steady employment, they moved into what are today shantytowns. A solution to this complex socioeconomic reality was proposed by President Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966–1970): an agrarian reform program. This reform was opposed by wealthy landowners and others who feared that such reform would undermine their economic interests. It therefore never materialized. Thus, from the late 1960s onward, the agrarian economic model in Colombia has favored large-scale industrial agriculture to the detriment of poor country folk. This reality has helped establish the conditions that have favored the social dislocation and tensions that characterize contemporary Colombian society.

MODERN TIMES

Despite the push for industrialization, the Colombian economy remains dependent on the exportation of primary products. More recently, fresh-cut flowers, coal, coffee, and oil have dominated the official Colombian export sector. The flower industry has benefited from lowering air-freight rates since the 1980s, ideal climatic and soil conditions, and an abundant labor force willing to work for low wages. Coal mining at El Cerrejón, the open-pit coal mining operation in the far northeast corner of the nation—the Guajira—has become an important part of the Colombian export sector. Cerrejón, a mining company purchased by a Swiss-Anglo corporation, Glencore in 2022, is a multibillion-dollar enterprise that, in 2013, returned 258 million dollars in royalties to the public and private sector in Colombia. That same year, the company exported more than thirty-three million tons of coal, mostly to Europe. As of 2022, the company employed 8,400 people and output from the mine has declined in recent years (from 27.6 million tons in 2019 to 14.9 million tons in 2021). However, the price of coal has increased dramatically

as world demand has grown (by 2022) thanks to a surge in the price of natural gas, traditionally used to generate electricity and reduced worldwide investment in environmentally unfriendly coal; in 2017, the price of coal was 94 dollars per ton—in 2022, the price climbed to 391 dollars.

Yet despite these seemingly robust royalty and employment figures, the region of the Guajira is one of the poorest in the nation and the majority of the region's GDP comes from coal royalties. But the people of the Guajira have not been enriched by the coal operation: In fact, of a total population of nearly one million, 27 percent of all children under five years of age are malnourished. Four hundred thousand indigenous Wayuú live in the Guajira and over the past couple of years, a historic water shortage in this desert region has grown acute, yet the Cerrejón operation uses about 16 million liters of water per day. Social conditions in the region forced the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and the Environment to condemn the operation in 2020. Mostly pacific protests and roadblocks by people in the region, in late 2022 resulted in a 70 percent decline in output. The coal mining operations will conclude by 2033—leaving behind a giant pit and a great deal of poverty in the northeast corner of Colombia.

The exportation of illegal narcotics, beginning with a marijuana boom on the north coast of Colombia based in and around Santa Marta and continuing later with cocaine processing and export, has distorted the Colombian economy, particularly during the past thirty years. "Narco-statistics" are unreliable by their very nature, but the influx and laundering of dirty capital is seen in the main cities—particularly in the booming construction sector during the 1990s (before the 1999 economic crash), the abundance of luxurious malls, and the construction of high-priced housing in the major Colombian cities. Most Colombians prefer to discuss the legitimate basis of their economy, but tens of billions of dollars have flowed in and out of Colombia in recent years due to the illegal drug trade. However, most of the wealth generated from illegal narcotics remains at the point of sale, that is, in the United States, Europe, or other places where consumers are willing to pay a premium for this particular Colombian export. Colombia is not the only Latin American nation to export cocaine (and, increasingly, heroin) to the north. Peruvian production of cocaine has increased dramatically during the past fifteen years, and Peru became the world's top *coca* leaf grower as of 2013, according to the BBC. From 2016 to 2017, total cultivation of *coca* leaf in Peru increased by 14 percent, according to statistics from the United Nations.

The Colombian economy has avoided the dizzying "boom and bust" cycles of neighboring Argentina, Brazil, or Ecuador due to careful management by elites who hold degrees from Colombian, European, or U.S. universities. But the political and economic fortunes of the country took a tragic turn in the

wake of a wave of political violence that ended the lives of three presidential candidates during the 1990 campaign.

A young Universidad de los Andes–trained economist, César Gaviria was elected president in 1990—a sort of "accidental" president. Gaviria had been campaign manager for the heir apparent to the Colombian presidency, Luis Carlos Galán, who was brutally murdered in August 1989 on orders of drug baron Pablo Escobar. Gaviria's tenure in office represented a clear alignment with the so-called Washington Consensus, which stressed privatization of key sectors of the Colombian economy, including the notoriously inefficient Telecom, the national telephone company, and important segments of the mining sector. The country's civil aviation industry was deregulated in 1991, and the airport at Cali was privatized. This push for privatization and market deregulation (often referred to as "neoliberalism") was rewarded by favorable treatment by the IMF and international investment bankers. Gaviria's presidency was followed, in 1994, by the liberal Ernesto Samper's tenure, marred from the very beginning by accusations of a six-million-dollar infusion of illegal funds into his campaign as the election approached. The United States revoked Samper's visa to travel there, as diplomatic and financial relations chilled substantially. The result of market deregulation, growing unemployment, and the general hostile economic and political climate between Washington and Bogotá fueled a severe recession, which began in earnest in 1999 and lasted about five years. The Colombian economy actually shrank by 4.5 percent during this time period, and unemployment reached 22 percent. Construction came to a virtual standstill in major cities, and the period looked especially grim, given that the guerilla forces during this time made significant gains in recruitment, their kidnapping operations continued unabated, and they seemed to hold the Colombian military on the defensive.

The economy gradually recovered after a massive infusion of outside aid known as "Plan Colombia"; more than 1.3 billion U.S. dollars (mostly in military aid) helped restore confidence in the Colombian economy during the Andrés Pastrana administration (1998–2002). The neoliberal policies continued during this time and into the Álvaro Uribe Vélez administration (2002–2010). Uribe represented a hard line against the guerilla forces; he planned to eradicate the FARC and ELN during his presidency, and he pushed for approval of an FTA, or free trade agreement, with the United States. That agreement, passed by the Colombian Senate, stalled in the U.S. Congress for five years but was finally authorized by the U.S. legislature and signed by President Obama in 2011.

The Colombian economy can be viewed as a resilient, market-based, mixed economy where manufacturing, mineral extraction, agriculture, and services combine to create a healthy, growth-oriented system. However, Colombia

remains one of the most unequal countries in Latin America and the world. The minimum wage in 2022 (the rate re-sets each year, on January 1) was 1,000,000 pesos or about two hundred fifty U.S. dollars per month. That rate increased by 16 percent in 2023, to 1.16 million pesos per month which represents, at current exchange rate, about 242 dollars per month. Poverty in some quarters of Colombia is almost surreal, as one observer recently noted while working in Tumaco, a small Pacific coast town, in 2010. "I've never seen misery like I saw in Tumaco. The children all have a white skin fungus due to the poor water quality; most are from displaced families that have built pathetic stilt homes in the impossible mangrove swamps. Few attend school, and those that do trudge through mud and human and animal feces barefoot."[7] The rich—people engaged in honest business and mining ventures—acquire vast fortunes, while the poor languish with under-resourced government programs or rely on private charity organizations to fill in the economic gaps.

Though its benefits are distributed unevenly, the Colombian economy endures. The challenge for future leaders will be to shrink the gap between the wealthiest Colombians and the poorest, thereby helping the poor realize that they, too, are stakeholders in the country's prosperity. President Gustavo Petro was elected, in June 2022, and took possession of the government in August of that same year; he acknowledged the glaring inequalities in the nation and promised to take action. Taxing the wealthiest Colombians and raising the minimum wage is a good start, but systemic change is required to permanently alter the Colombian economy and no one, at this writing, is certain what that looks like. However, it's clear that reducing economic inequality will help solve social problems, dampening down the impetus for armed insurgency while helping to unify the nation.

NOTES

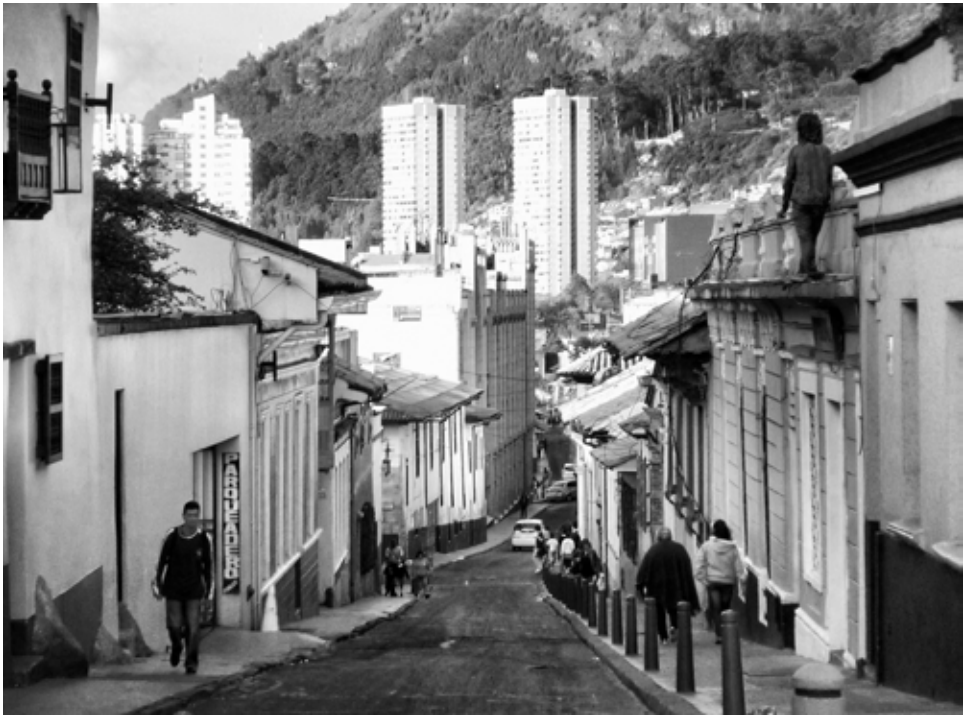
1. Zero represents absolute equality, and one hundred represents absolute inequality in this formula named for the Italian statistician Corrado Gini.
2. See David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 48–49.
3. Ibid., 173.
4. Marco Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875–2002* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 69.
5. From Ilan Stavans, *Gabriel García Márquez: The Early Years* (New York: Palgrave, 2010), 26.
6. Palacios, *Between Legitimacy and Violence*, 171.
7. Paul J. Angelo, private e-mail correspondence to Michael J. LaRosa, October 4, 2010.

PHOTO ESSAY

The twenty-two photos in this section are from four sources: Collection Germán Mejía (CGM), all taken by Germán Mejía; the Biblioteca Pública Piloto de Medellín/Archivo Fotográfico (BPP), taken by various individuals as noted in the captions; Michael LaRosa, taken in Bogotá in October 2016; and David C. LaFevor, taken in Cartagena in 2022.

1. Palenque de San Basilio
CGM, 2010
Place: Near Cartagena, Colombia

The Palenque de San Basilio is a community of about three thousand persons living on the outskirts of Cartagena, Colombia. *Palenque* is the Spanish term for "runaway slave community," and this particular community dates back to the sixteenth century. The people living in this community have created a unique culture and, though they speak Spanish, they also preserve a language that combines a variety of African languages. The Palenque of San Basilio is recognized as a unique ethnic community by the Colombian constitution of 1991. This photo demonstrates the Afro-Colombian presence on the Colombian coasts, and although the culture is strong, this group has not shared in the wealth generated by the modern Colombian economy.



2. Bogotá from La Candelaria
CGM, 2010
Place: Bogotá, Colombia

The city of Bogotá as viewed from the historic segment of the city, "the Candelaria." The architecture seen in this photo is a mixture of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century structures. There are no structures from the sixteenth century in Bogotá and very few from the seventeenth. The center of Bogotá is dynamic and fluid; it functions as the center of government, culture, and university life. There are several important universities in the city center, including the Universidad de los Andes, the Universidad del Rosario, and the Universidad Externado. The Candelaria has been, since the 1960s, a protected historic zone, which means the government regulates all architectural modifications and construction in the neighborhood.

3. El Carmen—plaza
CGM, 2009
Place: El Carmen, Norte de Santander

This town dates from the late seventeenth century. El Carmen is a typical town in Colombia that serves as interlocutor between the people who live in the countryside and the larger cities. This town plaza is the center of power in the locale; the notary, mayor's office, bank, and—most prominently—the Catholic Church are all present in the town center. During the twentieth century, parks such as the one seen here were constructed in town centers and named "Jardines de la República" (Republic Gardens); normally a statue of a Colombian patriotic hero would be prominently featured in the square.

4. Galán
CGM, 2009
Place: Charalá, Santander

José Antonio Galán, a captain and leader of the Comuneros rebellion in 1781, is heroically depicted in this statue, which occupies a central location on the main plaza of Charalá, the hometown of the hero. Galán, depicted shirtless and muscular, reminds people of the struggles of the past against foreign domination, in this case, the Spaniards. The Spaniards negotiated with the advancing Comunero army—which sought a relaxation on taxes and end to the hated tobacco monopoly—but reneged on the agreement. Galán continued the rebellion, was captured by Spanish forces, and was drawn out and quartered publicly.

5. Midterm elections, 1961
BPP, Horacio Gil Ochoa, 1961
Place: Medellín, Colombia

This photograph depicts midterm elections in Medellín while the Liberals hold on to national political power. Carlos Lleras Restrepo was the head of the Liberal Party, and his cousin, Alberto Lleras Camargo, had been elected president of the republic in 1958. This is the period when the "Frente Nacional" is in effect; the photo suggests a folkloric electoral process, complete with musicians; the National Front alleviated political and social tensions to some degree, by alternating political power every four years between the two major parties, Liberal and Conservative. The electoral workers take their task seriously, as suggested by the woman examining the *cédula*—the official government-issued identification document—of the voter.

6. Pope Paul VI arrives in Colombia
BPP, Alberto Palacio Roldán, 1968
Place: Bogotá's El Dorado International Airport

Pope Paul VI arrived in Bogotá, Colombia, in August 1968—the first visit by a pontiff to Latin America. The pope's arrival coincided with the closing of the 39th International Eucharistic Congress, held in Bogotá; the congress was designed to foment spirituality and prayer on the continent as a counterforce to advancing secularism and revolutionary activity in Latin America. Rome viewed Colombia as an integral ally in the defense of the Catholic faith, dating back to the 1887 Concordat, a treaty between the Holy See and the Colombian state. Pope Paul also provided encouragement to the Latin American bishops' meeting in Medellín. That meeting, in late August 1968, is seen as the organizational event from which a Latin American liberation theology would emerge.

7. Gaitán with family
BPP, Francisco Mejía, n.d.
Place: Colombia

Dating from the early 1940s, this photograph shows Jorge Eliécer Gaitán as "family man"; he is photographed with his daughter Gloria and wife, Amparo Jaramillo de Gaitán. This photomontage (the photo of the family is superimposed onto a background photo) is designed to show the liberal leader as both family man and man of the people. *El pueblo*—the people—literally surround Gaitán and family. The leader's expression of humility and calm contrasts with the way he is generally depicted: as a fiery populist politician, delivering speeches in crowded city plazas.

8. Missing bust at El Carmen
CGM, 2009
Place: El Carmen, Norte de Santander

The bust of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in El Carmen was destroyed in 1949, and this monument reminds visitors of the violence in the region during the 1940s. El Carmen, a Liberal town, was attacked on November 16, 1949, by a Conservative armed police force, resulting in about fifty deaths. One of the casualties of this day was the bust of the Liberal leader Gaitán, whose murder one year earlier in 1948 set off urban and rural violence. The inscription reads, "Here, the bust of the Colombian leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán Ayala was destroyed by a violent horde."

9. Quibdó, Chocó
CGM, 2010
Place: Quibdó, Chocó

This photo, shot from the Atrato River toward the city of Quibdó, reflects the precarious condition in which many people live in this region of Colombia. Quibdó is the capital city of the west coast department, Chocó; this region is rich in mineral resources and straddles a region of indigenous and Afro-Colombian people. Quibdó is a city mired in poverty, and little progress has been made at bringing social development to this region of Colombia. The housing on stilts is designed to resist the fickle waters of the Atrato.

10. Chapolera
BPP, Gabriel Pérez Carvajal, n.d.
Place: Coffee region of Colombia

Chapoleras (from the Spanish verb *chapolear*—"to flit from flower to flower") are Colombian migrant workers who move from place to place cultivating agricultural products. They were mostly associated with the coffee harvest, as seen here. Chapoleras were hired during harvesttime in the coffee region, and they travelled in family units; landowners generally preferred women coffee pickers—women were viewed, in general, as a less troublesome labor force and as more able than men to carry out the delicate work of picking coffee beans. This photo is probably from the 1950s and was most likely taken in the Colombian coffee-growing region.

11. Fishermen
CGM, 2005
Place: Cartagena, Colombia

This photograph, shot at Cartagena's popular beach known as "La Boquilla," shows fishermen in a human-powered *lancha* (raft or canoe) leaving to fish using traditional equipment. This photo captures the struggles of hard-working fishermen and conveys an active determination and willingness to work and venture against seemingly insurmountable odds.

12. Camino Real
CGM, 2009
Place: Guaduas, Cundinamarca

This photograph of a segment of a Colombian camino real, or "royal road," is a beautiful example of the road system envisioned and constructed by the Spaniards throughout the Americas. This road, probably dating from the seventeenth century, was designed to facilitate communications between towns in the far-flung empire. Royal roads were built wherever there was a Spanish presence; thus, they can be found in Argentina and even in what is today California in the United States. Spanish road builders were likely influenced by the legacy of Roman road builders given Rome's extension into the Iberian Peninsula and their rule there for about six hundred years.

13. Magdalena River and Girardot
CGM, 2004
Place: Flandes, Tolima

This view of the Magdalena River and the town of Girardot is taken from Flandes, on the other side of the river. The Magdalena is the central artery of Colombia, and in the period prior to aviation, it was the only viable link between the capital city and the north coast. Many towns and cities developed along the Magdalena, surviving off of commerce generated through river traffic. Steamship service during the nineteenth century seemed to offer a modern manner of conquering the mighty Magdalena, but funding flowed toward more fashionable railroad technology after mid-century, and the steamships, with the advent of the automobile in the twentieth century, disappeared altogether. The towns along the river, however, remain.

14. Mule at Charalá
CGM, 2009
Place: Charalá, Santander

This lonely mule in the middle of the plaza at Charalá reminds viewers of a period in time when pack animals moved a wide array of products over long distances in Colombia. Colombian muleteers, called *arrieros*, drove hundreds of mules and burros over rough terrain, delivering all sorts of agricultural products, finished goods, and news of the world; even today, in many places in Colombia, mules still provide reliable, sturdy, and economic transportation. Thus, it is not at all unusual to see a mule, donkey, or other *animal de carga* (animal charged with carrying) in the center of rural and even moderately populated communities.

15. Plaza musicians
CGM, 2009
Place: Guaduas, Cundinamarca

A typical scene on a Sunday afternoon: a local band plays in the center of Guaduas, Cundinamarca. This photo shows part of the cultural life of a small town; more than five hundred music schools exist in Colombia, most with some support from the government. The schools train young people to play music, an alternative to less-glamorous activities and/or organizations competing for the attention of the youth. These town bands generally perform at town celebrations and during the commemoration of national holidays and religious feasts.

16. Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy with Carlos Lleras Restrepo
BPP, Anonymous, n.d.
Place: United States

Carlos Lleras Restrepo was elected president of Colombia in 1966, as a Liberal during the National Front. To help industrialize Colombia, he pushed ISI policies—Import Substituting Industrialization—much to the dismay of Washington. He openly rejected the advice of Washington-based IMF (International Monetary Fund) and the World Bank, but he never sought to separate Colombia from Washington's centrifugal pull. This undated photo of the Colombian president with Jacqueline Kennedy suggests a warm, collaborative relationship between Colombia and the United States despite underlying tensions generated by Lleras's independence before the IMF.

17. Peace Posters, Calle 50 with Avenida Caracas, Bogotá
M. LaRosa, 2016
Place: Bogotá, Colombia

On September 25, 2016, formal Peace Accords were signed between the Colombian government of Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC-EP. Immediately after the ceremony, a massive public relations campaign emerged to convince Colombian citizens to vote "Sí" [yes] for the peace plan in a national plebiscite, held on October 2. These posters were plastered all over the city; "Súmate!," in this context, calls on citizens to see that peace makes sense: "Just add it all up!" The LGBTI community, evidenced by these posters, supported the peace plan. The Sí vote lost at the polls by about one half of one percentage point, reflecting a deeply divided nation.

18. New Faculty of Arts Building, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá
M. LaRosa, 2016
Place: Main campus, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá

"A nation at peace must have art," said Jorge Humberto Peláez, S.J., rector of the Javeriana University, shortly before this new building opened in October 2015. The building, formally referred to as the Gerardo Arango, S.J., Facultad de Artes is named for the former rector of the university, widely acknowledged as the visionary leader behind the institution's growth and modernization. The university's significant investment in art is a challenge for the entire nation to rethink budgets and priorities as the nation moves, slowly, toward peace.

19. Sidewalk Bookstore
David C. LaFevor, 2022
Place: Cartagena, Colombia

This photo demonstrates the informal Colombian economy. This bookstand, along the wall of the University of Cartagena, sells popular titles in translation, together with some of the classics of Latin American literature, including works by Colombians Gabriel García Márquez and Héctor Abad Faciolince and the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa. The formality of the university here is juxtaposed by the accessibility of this "popular bookstore"; many books in Colombia are marketed and sold in a similar manner.

20. Colonial Cartagena
David C. LaFevor, 2022
Place: Cartagena, Colombia

This photo of the Jesuit Iglesia de San Pedro Claver was built in the early seventeenth century and is one of the most iconic and important churches in the nation. The front altar contains the mortal remains of the saint. Claver, a Spaniard, is known as the "Slave of the slaves"; he ministered to arriving Africans at the port city and is said to have baptized three hundred thousand during a forty-year period. The main cathedral of the city is in the background; it is called the Catedral de Santa Catalina de Alejandría.

21. Plaza Botero
CGM, 2016
Place: Medellín, Colombia

This plaza scene shows the Museo de Antioquia, Medellín, in the background. The "Plaza Botero" is home to many of the artist's bronze sculptures. Renovations to this plaza represented a renaissance of sorts for the city of Medellín, changing its image from a grimy, dangerous urban area to one that emphasizes art and community. Fernando Botero, Colombia's most famous living artist, donated most of the work for the plaza and museum. In a deliberate fashion, the city has been building parks and outdoor public spaces for tourists and citizens alike.

22. Casa Mutis
CGM, 2008
Place: Mariquita, Colombia

This is the house where José Celestino Mutis lived while in Colombia. It was also the headquarters of the botanical expedition for a brief period. Mutis, the Spanish physician to the Virrey—Vice King—arrived in Colombia in 1761 and remained there until his death in 1808. A mathematician, physician, priest, and botanist, Mutis represented an important transition from the colonial era to more modern times; he focused on science and evidence, using new enlightened principles to guide his research and writing.

Chapter Eight

A Common Space

Building a community that could identify itself as Colombian once the complex process of independence ended was by no means an easy task. Several factors worked for and against such a community, including the social dynamics that were unleashed through partisan politics, the search for a system of commonly held beliefs through Catholicism, attempts at creating common memories, and the creation of institutions such as the armed forces or the National Bank of the Republic. To some degree, the regions were woven together through overarching instruments of governance and public administration. The obstacles presented by geography, however, were formidable, and geography, as discussed earlier, has imprinted a unique identity on Colombia. It was not enough to be known as Liberal or Conservative, to be Catholic and speak the same language, or even to engage in commerce using the same legal tender. In order to form a Colombian community after independence, the state had to establish its capacity to govern immediately and everywhere. People had to be able to move according to the rhythms of business and personal aspirations. Goods needed viable and open markets, and trade could not be stopped simply because of the high costs of transportation. Public opinion needed to be informed by what was happening in all corners of the country and the world. In short, people, goods, ideas, and institutions needed to flow easily throughout the country's territory—both the territory that was actually occupied and that which was slowly being incorporated through the forces of demographic change and colonization.

The nation as we know it today is a political community. A previous chapter explained how Colombia is a country of nations. From the period of the early republic, it was difficult to accept that cultural diversity and ideological pluralisms could coexist within one political community. The idea that the nation needed to be culturally homogeneous held sway. Thus, a concerted

effort was made to implant throughout the country a unified idea about civilization. This idea, created by urban elites, was a hybrid that brought together democratic-liberal institutions and principles, the ideals of capitalist bourgeois thinkers, and the norms and practices of Catholicism. The notion of inhabiting one common national space was thereby founded through an elite ideal of civilization. From 1830 until the profound social crises that lasted from about 1960 to 1980, the fundamental objective of governance was to force all populations to meet these elite ideals of civilization. Thus, at the end of the twentieth century, a paradox became evident. The geography had been largely reined in through agile and efficient modes of communication, but the cultural homogeneity that elites imprinted since the end of the nineteenth century was clearly not viable. Instead, the late twentieth century witnessed acceptance of cultural diversity and plurality as essential components of the Colombian social order. In other words, today it is clear that the national community can only be political, and for this reason, the territory it occupies is political as well.

In Colombia, the distance that separated people was not measured in miles but in traditions. Cultural niches had been constituted over the course of centuries, fostered by a geography that separated Colombians by high mountain ranges, deep valleys, and dense jungles. These obstacles impeded the consolidation of a national community—that is, a group of human beings who shared a common identity, lived under a common set of rules, and were conscious of inhabiting a common space. Therefore, in order to achieve this national ideal, a tremendous economic, technological, and administrative effort was put forth not only by the state but also by the private sector. Such a task required immense capital so as to build more efficient systems of communication. The private sector was indispensable in this respect, but the state needed to accumulate administrative experience to contract out the public works that would be developed. These efforts gave shape to the institutions and mechanisms of control that guaranteed the execution of planned projects. Today, two hundred years later, the accomplishments are obvious; nevertheless, the aforementioned paradox remains. Unity has been created over the territory, reaffirming Colombia as a political community in terms of participation and interests, but the nation is still only loosely homogeneous in a cultural sense.

The purpose of this chapter, then, is to explain the creation of a space that became national as a result of the reduction of distances through the construction of multiple systems of transportation, however disarticulated. Also involved in this process was the implementation of efficient communication technologies and the interregional diffusion of ideas and news to create a more well-informed public with a shared public opinion. These elements gave shape to a common space. After two centuries, these were the primary

circumstances that made Colombia a singular political community within the world order of nation-states.

FROM HORSE PATH TO HIGHWAY

The republic inherited from the colonial period a preference of settlement that privileged the interior Andean areas of the country at one thousand meters above sea level or higher. These were the regions that had been inhabited for centuries by indigenous peoples who had actively sought out fertile lands at healthier altitudes, away from sea-level pests and swamps that were common to the so-called hot lands. The Spanish conquistadors also preferred these higher-elevation lands, and they took advantage of the already-existing labor force in these regions. Only two cities developed on the Colombian Caribbean coast during the colonial period: Cartagena and Santa Marta. The other exceptions to the interior high-elevation model are the few dozen or so mining towns that sprang up in territories that were uninhabitable but attractive for their resources. Another territory that lay outside the settlement pattern should also be mentioned: the few villages of mixed-race peoples on the banks of large rivers that functioned as ports for the transit of goods and people to the mountain towns. However, excluding Cartagena and Santa Marta, the principal cities and *pueblos* remained in the mountain ranges, far from the sea and the large rivers, and were themselves isolated from one another by high altitudes and deep chasms that led to nearly insurmountable transportation difficulties.

In many places during the colonial period, the people constructed roads over pre-Columbian routes and made them passable not only for humans but also for mules, horses, and oxen. Some of these acquired the rank of Camino Real—a "royal road." The Camino Real was paved with cobblestones and met special characteristics of water management and the control of elevation over the surface of the road. All these roads, royal or otherwise, provided for human foot traffic but never more than this basic function. None served as a path over which wheeled vehicles could pass. The wheel was used only in the interior of population centers, perhaps on some haciendas, and in mining areas. The broad lane that inaugurated an entrance to Santafé from the west was a significant novelty in the eighteenth century, and so was the road that connected Bogotá with Zipaquirá via the Puente del Común at the turn of the nineteenth century. But the only way to get from Bogotá to Popayán in the southwest, to Cartagena on the coast, or to Medellín was via foot or on the backs of horses or mules. Spaniards at that time traveled in sedan chairs, literally on the backs of indigenous carriers.

These difficulties did not mean, however, that communication was stifled among regions. Quite the contrary; according to modern standards, the rhythm of transportation was slow during the colonial period and costly due to its precarious nature, but people and goods as well as mail, and with it, news and edicts of government, reached all populated areas. These voyages were infrequent. Most people did not engage in long-distance travel; most were born, lived, loved, and died in the place of their birth. When individuals did have to travel to faraway places, the travelers prepared themselves for a prolonged absence, which could last months or years. The nineteenth century did not represent any palpable change in terms of speed of travel, but it did witness a significant expansion of roadways and transportation networks. The daunting task of building roads that could sustain wheeled traffic began to take shape given that vehicles could not always follow the footpaths or walkways carved out along mountainsides. Also, these mapped-out routes for walkers crossed obstacles that were impossible for carts and other wheeled vehicles to traverse, for example, hanging bridges made out of henequen rope.

By June 16, 1845, the government issued a decree that inaugurated the first plan for a road network that would guarantee communication between the capital in Bogotá with the cities and ports located on the borders with other countries and on the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. The routes included Bogotá to Venezuela via Tunja and Pamplona; Bogotá to Ecuador and the Pacific coast via Neiva, Popayán, and Pasto; Bogotá to Buenaventura via Mariquita and the Valle del Cauca River; Bogotá to a navigable port at the Atrato River or to the Gulf of Urabá via Mariquita; a route to the Caribbean via the Magdalena River; and a route that would cross Panama, thereby connecting the Caribbean with the Pacific. To construct or repair these national roads, the state granted parcels of unincorporated land to private entities, which led to the immigration of technicians. A labor force was "recruited" by forcing prisoners to work on these roads.

None of the successive governments of the nineteenth century took the formidable task of expanding the national road network lightly. They dedicated significant funds toward either improving existing roads or opening new ones for horse traffic or wheeled vehicles. Laws and decrees are not the only signs of these efforts. Evidence can also be found among the national budget allocations of the period, including funds set aside for civil engineering education. The national government created a military school that would train engineers, and later, the National University in Bogotá and the National School of Mines in Medellín further encouraged infrastructural development. The training of civil engineers capable of confronting and defeating the mountains was key. Foreign civil engineers were recruited, and foreign technology and materials

were imported. Entrepreneurs took advantage of incentives to invest in new roads via the provision of large swaths of what would become valuable state lands after the roads were built. Fundamental to this entire process were the incentives granted by the state and employers so that settlers could go and populate the lands adjacent to the roads. These people took care of the roads as part of their obligation and, at the same time, brought their products to the markets that sprang up along the new road.

Thus, the country began the twentieth century served by an extensive road network that primarily comprised horse paths and some roads that allowed for wheeled vehicles. The logic and goals were simple: to move products to nearby markets and, if those products, such as coffee and tobacco, were designated for export, to find ways out to the Magdalena River or to the western port of Buenaventura. Similarly, for the state, these roadways needed to ease communications among people and allow freedom of movement throughout the country. Because transportation was so important, by 1905 the Ministry of Public Works was created. This ministry was assigned many of the tasks previously delegated to the Ministry of Development. In this way, the state prepared itself institutionally to confront a challenge that had not been satisfactorily mastered: the integration of the country so that people and goods could quickly flow throughout its territory.

Construction projects during the first three decades of the twentieth century defined the future of the country's transport system: a predilection for the automobile, buses, and trucks. Roadways thereby became central to national planning. The first car to move over the Colombian territory did so in Medellín in 1899. Nevertheless, the road trip that inaugurated an increasing preference for automobiles was taken in 1905 by the president at that time, Rafael Reyes, from Bogotá to Santa Rosa de Viterbo in Boyacá, his place of birth. In order to make this voyage possible, the precarious road that linked the two cities via Tunja had to be prepared to allow for automobile traffic. Ultimately, roadways turned out to be more affordable than trains due to the difficult geological conditions of Colombia. Automobiles were much more efficient for travel among cities and towns and for accessing the myriad market towns located in the foothills and valleys that separated them. Railways proved impractical in Colombia due to the nation's physical geography and the specific technical limitations of rail technology. This will be examined in greater detail, but for now it is important to note that railway lines were never able to efficiently transport goods and people within the Colombian mountainous territory. By the time railways were constructed within a system that never was quite completed, roadways had already come to dominate the nation's transportation needs.

The impetus from the national and departmental governments to improve old dirt roads and to build new roadways occurred during the first decades

of the twentieth century. By 1930, a total of 107,615 kilometers of roadways were viable for transportation; yet, of the grand total, only 5,743 kilometers (or about 5 percent of the total network) were viable for motorized vehicles. Nevertheless, in 1930 many Colombians still used mules as their primary form of transportation. By 1946, 17,900 kilometers of roads were made viable for motor vehicles. Of these, 391 kilometers had been paved. Not until 1970 was the entire road from Cali to the western port of Buenaventura paved, a route that is fundamental for the international commerce of the country, as it links the interior with the only major Pacific port.

Note that in the United States, it was not until the Eisenhower administration (the 1950s) that the country organized and built its national interstate highway system. By the end of 2022, the total network of Colombian roadways extended to 206,102 kilometers (or 128,000 miles); 16,893 are part of the Primary Network (2,279 kilometers with double lanes and 40 tunnels)—completely paved and under the care of the national government. This Primary Network connects the departmental capitals and from these, toward the international borders, they connect the nation to the primary ports at the Pacific and Caribbean. Forty-four thousand four hundred kilometers are part of the secondary network and 144,809 make up the tertiary network—roads under control of the departments and municipalities. This tertiary network is vital for the economics of the nation since they connect the municipal governmental centers with the departmental capitals and they also connect villages and hamlets but many of these roads are unpaved.

STEAMSHIPS AND RAILWAYS

Government officials and entrepreneurs had taken a variety of transportation methods into account early in the nineteenth century. But the implementation of steamship navigation and railways was impossible until the costs could be justified by the adequate size of markets, a significant need to move people, and sales of products destined for export. By the 1820s, the administrations of Bolívar and Santander granted Juan Bernardo Elbers, a German entrepreneur who became a naturalized Colombian citizen, the official privilege to engage in steamship navigation along the Magdalena River. In effect, as of 1825, two steamships, the Bolívar and the Santander, plied the waters of that river, but their coverage was limited to the area near the mouth of the river, and service lasted only a few years. Other similar attempts also failed. Not until 1850 was steamship navigation consolidated along the Magdalena. Over the course of those twenty-five years, economic monopolies had been abolished, commerce had been expanded thanks to products being sent downriver for

exportation, and new trade routes were established that looked toward the Magdalena as a source for markets in other areas of the country.

By 1926, eighteen firms operated eighty steamships, and they pulled 155 barges that together towed over six hundred thousand tons of merchandise. This was the epoch of maximum development for steamship navigation along the Magdalena River. By the mid-twentieth century, the importance of the Magdalena as a shipment lane had significantly declined as other forms of transportation supplanted the steamship by eliminating costly transshipment of merchandise from ship to truck or, less frequently, from ship to train. Overland transportation became more common since it could better handle transportation from ports on the river to distant populations in the interior. Other obstacles that further hindered steamship development involved the dramatic, damaging cycles of rain and dry seasons, the cost of fuel, and, in general, the lack of sufficient return on the transported merchandise. By the mid-twentieth century, people increasingly preferred aviation as the most secure means of transportation and ultimately the most economical way to travel from the capital to the coast and the exterior. Thus, steamship transportation along the Magdalena River is now a mere memory.

The Magdalena River was not the only waterway that served to facilitate steamship navigation. The Atrato River on the west coast was a key transportation route. *The Esmeralda* arrived in Quibdó in 1852 and was used by a joint stock company starting in 1855. Additionally, some segments of the Cauca River were navigable, connecting Cali with La Virginia starting in the late nineteenth century until 1928, the year that railroad service began between these two points. The Zulia River allowed Cúcuta to connect with the Maracaibo Gulf via steamship in the final years of the 1880s. The Meta River in the eastern plains was used beginning in the mid-nineteenth century; it was easily navigated by steamships and, when reaching the Orinoco River, connected the center of the country with the Atlantic Ocean. The Putumayo River, in the southeast Amazon basin, facilitated commerce in quinine and, especially, rubber. This also occurred along the Amazon River once Emperor Pedro II of Brazil declared free trade in 1867. Other rivers allowed for travel via steamships, such as the Bogotá River, which facilitated shipment of coal to the capital in the late nineteenth century. Taken together, these non-Magdalena-River routes were marginal to the economic development of the country and ended up being supplanted by roadways and motorized vehicles and, to a lesser degree, by rail.

The rail system with its multiple cars and locomotives and parallel tracks, which profoundly impacted how humans around the world tackled long distances beginning in the early nineteenth century, was a public preference in Colombia from very early on. But, as with steam navigation, this mode

of transportation could be implemented only when freight and passenger demand brought in real profits. Construction of the first railway began in 1850 when the Colombian government authorized North American entrepreneurs to build what would turn out to be one of the first and most profitable railways on the American continent: the Panama Railway. This line, by 1855, crossed the Isthmus of Panama from Colón to Panama City. Some years would pass before each of the federal states in Colombia would propose construction of their own railway lines. The states believed railways would facilitate the transport of local products to regional markets, especially to capital cities, and would facilitate the exportation of goods to the Magdalena River, toward Cartagena and Barranquilla at the Caribbean or Buenaventura at the Pacific. When the country unified in 1886, this drive to build railroads intensified; however, now the central state assumed as its duty the continuation of public works and initiated new railway projects that were key for the country's development. Thus, a coherent system of roadways, railways, and steamship navigation emerged and was designed to optimize the transportation of merchandise and passengers.

Table 8.1 presents the main lines and rail routes constructed in Colombia throughout its history, detailing the year when each railroad construction began, when each was finalized, and the length of each trajectory. The duration of these projects is noteworthy—these figures suggest the severity of difficulties to be overcome. It is also important to note how the lines connected with one another. For example, the Valle of Cauca line connected with those of Antioquia and the coffee regions of the states of Caldas, Risaralda, and Quindío. The railway of the savannah of Bogotá connected with that of La Dorada, and this route, in turn, met up with Puerto Berrío and Santa Marta. The Bogotá to Girardot railway connected with the line that ran from Flandes to Neiva (Villavieja). Thus, an interconnected system, one that streamlined communication, was created. Finally, as is evident from the table, railways were no longer constructed after the mid-twentieth century. The last line built linked La Dorada with Santa Marta in 1961; the crisis of railroads—precipitated by their limited profitability—coincided with the crisis in steamship navigation along the Magdalena.

The crisis of the rail system was not really the result of the devilish geography that posed so many obstacles for its construction and function. Railways were a problem because the state did not have the political will or power to deal with private interests successfully. Private investors and subcontractors engaged in practices that ultimately brought the entire railway-building enterprise to a halt. They changed the routes of the railways for reasons having more to do with potential personal profit than the good of the nation. Investors manipulated contracts to the benefit of some businesses either

Table 8.1. Railroad National Network

Line or Trajectory	*Years of Construction*	*Length (km)*
Panama	1850–1855	77
Puerto Colombia–Barranquilla	1869–1888	28
Cartagena–Calamar	1890–1894	105
Central de Bolívar (Cartagena–Medellín, but only to Gambote)	ca. 1922–1925	nd
RR de Antioquia (Puerto Berrío–Medellín)	1874–1929	193
Medellín–Jericó (Río Cauca)	1911–1930	127
Buenaventura–Cali–Palmira	1878–1915–1917	To Cali 173
Cali–Popayán	1914–1926	158
Cali–Zarzal–La Virginia	1917–1924–1928	nd
La Virginia–La Pintada (Río Cauca)	1928–1951	nd
Zarzal–Armenia	1927	nd
Cartago–Pereira–Manizales	1915–1921–1927	111
Tumaco–El Diviso	1925–1928	109
La Dorada–Ambalema	1881–1907	111
Ambalema–Buenos Aires	1919–1931	65
Ibagué–Flandes	1899–1921	76
Espinal–Neiva (Villavieja)	1919–1930	185
La Dorada–Puerto Berrío–Bosconia–Fundación–Santa Marta	1953–1961	nd
Girardot–Facatativá	1881–1910	131
RR of La Sabana (Bogotá–Facatativá)	1882–1889	39
Facatativá–La Dorada (Palanquero)	1925–nd	197
Bogotá–Soacha–Sibaté (RR of the South)	1896–1903–1906	30
Branch, El Charquito–Tequendama Falls	Construction ends in 1927	10
Branch, Sibaté–San Miguel	1925–1929	41
RR of the North (Bogotá–Zipaquirá–Chiquinquirá–Barbosa)	1893–1898–1928; to Barbosa after 1930	nd
Puerto Wilches–Bucaramanga	1881–1941	109
Santa Marta–Fundación	1882–1906	94
RR of the Northeast (Bogotá–Tunja–Sogamoso)	1925–1931	nd
Cúcuta–Villamizar	ca. 1879–1926	60
Branch, Cúcuta–El Diamante	1926–1929	42
Branch, La Frontera	1895–1897	16

Source: Víctor Manuel Patiño, *Historia de la Cultura Material*. Tomo 3 (Bogotá: Instituto Caro y Cuervo, 1990–1993). Corrected by Juan Santiago Correa.
nd = no data available.

by overcharging or by winning breach-of-contract lawsuits. The contracts, generally unclear and/or overly generous to the railway companies, resulted in lawsuits that were overwhelmingly won in favor of the companies to the detriment of the state. Another factor was the incompetence of public officials who never seemed to be able to verify the excuses companies made for

delays. Companies were unable to complete the lines according to the terms of the contract, and there was little to no governmental oversight. Similarly, construction delays, which dragged on in some cases well into the mid-twentieth century and led to only partial utility of the rail lines, meant that this system could not compete with the emerging road network, which, despite its shortcomings, managed to achieve continuity over long distances.

AERIAL CABLES AND AIRPLANES

The coffee grown in the fertile lands of Caldas was first exported out of Colombia in large quantities beginning in the twentieth century. Coffee reached the Magdalena River at Honda on its way to the Caribbean ports after a long journey on muleback. A train line covering this route was impossible due to the terrain. The train that finally was built went toward the Pacific port of Buenaventura, a wise political and engineering decision, but the line was not completed until the end of the 1920s, after the opening of the Panama Canal, which permitted the Pacific ports of Colombia to connect with the Caribbean and Atlantic Ocean.

Before the completion of the rail line to Buenaventura, Colombian entrepreneurs, out of an urgent need to move coffee to markets, found that an aerial cable—loosely equivalent to a ski lift for coffee—could offer a solution. Construction began in 1913, and the aerial cable was inaugurated in 1922. It connected Manizales with Mariquita. Over the course of seventy-two kilometers of cable length supported by 376 towers, the aerial cable transported up to ten tons of coffee and other merchandise per hour on about eight hundred wagons. The cable continued in use until 1961 and became one of the key factors that made Manizales the most important regional center in all of the coffee-growing areas of the country. As a result of the success of this cable, other projects for aerial transportation of coffee were initiated in the region. For example, in 1927, a line was built from Manizales to the town of Villamaría. Another line was designated to reach north from Manizales to the town of Aranzazu in 1928. A third, begun in 1929, was designed to go west to the Chocó. None of these trajectories was constructed beyond a few kilometers, and these additions had a negligible impact on commerce.

Based on the successful Manizales–Mariquita cable, a new line was built from the populations of Ocaña, up in the Andes, to the town of Gamarra, down at the Magdalena River. This facilitated the transportation of merchandise to and from the populous Department of Norte de Santander. Some 204 towers connected over forty-seven kilometers; the project was inaugurated in 1929 but functioned for only a few years.

The greatest impact on the country's communications was from air transportation. The first few public demonstrations of aerial flights occurred in the nineteenth century with hot-air balloons in the cities of Popayán, Bogotá, Medellín, Barranquilla, and Tunja. Other exhibition flights, this time by airplane, took place in the early twentieth century. Passenger aviation that could also carry merchandise and mail began in September 1919 through the creation, by several businessmen from Medellín, of the Colombian Air Navigation Company (CCNA). The company initially owned four planes, which allowed it to win a contract with the national government to transport mail and passengers. The CCNA began operations in 1920 between Cartagena and Barranquilla. In 1921, it launched its first flight to Medellín. Economic problems led to the company's liquidation in 1923; nevertheless, aviation fever spread quickly in Colombia. Soon thereafter the Santanderian Aviation Company (COSADA) began service in 1923, and the Urabá-Medellín and Central Airways (UMCA) opened in 1932.

Notwithstanding these developments, SCADTA (the Colombo-German Society of Air Transport) was created by Colombian and German entrepreneurs on December 5, 1919, in Barranquilla; it allowed air transport to take shape definitively in the nation. SCADTA permanently connected the center of the country with the Caribbean coast. The first flight from Barranquilla to Puerto Berrío occurred in September 1920. On October 19, a weekly flight was inaugurated between Barranquilla and Girardot, and on November 18, 1920, the first SCADTA flight landed in Bogotá. Earlier, in March 1920, the national government passed Decree 599, regulating "Law 126," which mentioned air travel in reference to military aviation. This decree went further by regulating aerial navigation overall within the national territory. It was in this way that a long history of air service began that has become widespread over the country and now connects Colombia with countries in South America, North America, and Europe.

MAIL AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS

A mail system began functioning early in the sixteenth century in what is today Colombian territory, and the Spanish Crown at that time contracted the service to private parties. Beginning in the eighteenth century, with the reforms of King Charles III, the Crown attempted to rein in control over mail by sending to the Americas appointed employees. The mail system became efficient through the direct control of the viceroy, and, fortunately, it was this system that the republican governments inherited. Some historians estimate that at the end of the eighteenth century, mail reached some one thousand

places in what is now the Colombian territory and twelve thousand sites throughout the continent.

Enhancing the efficiency of the postal system was one of the major concerns of the Santander presidential administration (1821–1826). The following years were rich in government regulations related to mail handling—some regulations promoted free and open transportation of national and foreign newspapers. Toward the mid-nineteenth century, what was then the Republic of New Granada, recognized 154 postal offices, and postal couriers traveled about eleven thousand kilometers carrying letters, official information, and even merchandise among these offices. One century later, in 1948, 1,218 post offices existed throughout the territory. In order to facilitate the postal system and to control costs associated with it, in 1859, stamps were used for the first time in the national postal system. This year was also the year that the first Organic Law of the National Postal System was issued.

But the onset of aviation, as mentioned above, included the handling of mail. This process began in a limited fashion in 1919 and grew steadily during the following years. Thus, the postal system, which is now privatized in the country after having been nationalized in the early twentieth century, strengthened during a two-hundred-year period. It connected people emotionally and financially and provided a sense that Colombians all formed part of the same territory.

The telegraph was a mechanism that proved more powerful than the mail system due to its speed. Parallel to the development of the railways, the first telegraph line ran along the Panama Railway during the mid-nineteenth century. Within the territory of what is now Colombia, the Radical Liberal Murillo Toro administration used state funds and some private capital to construct the first telegraph line, which allowed for communication between Bogotá and the hamlet of Cuatro Esquinas (now known as Mosquera) in the Bogotá savannah, on November 1, 1865. A few months later, in April 1866, this line reached Ambalema, allowing the tobacco trade to be largely managed from Bogotá. At the same time, in Antioquia, another line was constructed designed to connect Medellín to Manizales. In this way, Medellín was integrated with the recently colonized regions to the south of the city. Something similar happened among those living along the Cauca River. In 1867 shares were sold to develop the company that would unite, via telegraph, the population of Cartago with the port of Buenaventura. That same year, Congress authorized the government to establish communications with other countries via transoceanic cables. All of these developments and the importance given to the new system led to the creation of the Directorate of Posts and Telegraphs. Soon thereafter, a telegraph school opened, and telegraph operation was monopolized by female workers—much in the same way

as in the United States, for example, where early telephone operators were predominantly women.

During the next few years, telegraph lines were constructed from Bogotá to Manizales, Medellín, Tunja, and Bucaramanga. In only two years, the system's capacity doubled; thus, by 1875, 2,045 kilometers of telegraph line were in operation. The system had developed to the point where on April 12, 1876, news arrived—in two days' time—from London. The president of Colombia received a telegram that had taken the route of London–Jamaica–Colón–Panama–Buenaventura–Bogotá. In this way, the underwater cable, connected to its overland network, had finally defeated long distances through technological innovation. These telegraph lines strengthened the sensation of inhabiting a space that had somehow become more close-knit.

In 1886, when the federal system had been eradicated under the new constitution, the rapid speed with which communications traversed the territory began to shape Colombian society. For example, the presidential palace had its own telegraph set beginning in 1876. Two years later, the first phone call was made in the capital, although still under experimental conditions. In 1882 Colombia was connected via the Pacific base in Buenaventura with Peru, Ecuador, Mexico, and the United States. Europe was already a communication partner, as referenced earlier, via Colón and Jamaica. Once these feats were achieved, the twentieth century witnessed technological innovations and communication speeds that not even the most optimistic people of the nineteenth century could have predicted; wireless telegraph first, telephone next, then radio, television at midcentury, and then satellite systems and the internet in the last decades of the century. These developments have profoundly transformed the ways in which the nations of the world and their peoples communicate with one another, redefining dominions and liberties. Colombia is no exception; on the contrary, the nation has continually pushed to remain up to date with the latest communications innovations. As a part of government policy, Colombia strengthened public control over communications systems, creating a new Ministry of the Post Office and Telegraphs in 1923 and hiring a Belgian Communications Mission in 1924.

During the 1920s, amateur Colombian radio enthusiasts began communicating with one another and with people from other countries. Experimental radio transmissions were realized in 1923, and commercial radio broadcasts began in 1930 via private radio stations in the country's major cities: one was called *The Voice of Colombia* in Bogotá, and in Tunja, *The Voice of Tunja*; HKJ and HKK in Cali; HKT in Manizales; and the following year, *The Voice of Chapinero* in Bogotá; *Echo of the Mountain* and *Medellín Radio* in Medellín; another station in Cali, HKR; and in 1934 (in Bogotá) *La Voz de la Víctor* began to broadcast political news with distinct partisan leanings in the

first radio news show of its kind in Colombian history. The local, or at most, regional, nature of radio stations was characteristic of the way the system operated well into the twentieth century. In 1940, La Radio Nacional was created, and it became the official station of the state. As such, it officially represented the country and served as the vehicle of communication for the government. But the first radio network, that covered the entire nation (as will be seen in the chapter dealing with "Daily Life") was called Radio Sutatenza; it was set up by the Catholic Church at the town of the same name in 1947 in the department of Boyacá.

Colombia nationalized its communications through Law 6 of 1943. The law authorized the government to create a company that unified all the systems of radiotelegraphy that operated in the country. In August 1943, the National Radio Communications Company was created after the purchase of the Marconi wireless telegraph. Four years later, in 1947, the government—through its creation of the National Company of Telecommunications (TELECOM)—executed a similar operation and joined the National Radio Communications Company the following year. Thus, the state was in control of both the radio spectrum—although it did permit private commercial use—and long-distance telephone service, while also regulating local and regional telephone services.

This tendency to control communications from the public sector continued when it came to television. In 1954, the first Colombian television program was aired, and it relied on the newly created television division of National Radio. The following decades witnessed the rapid development of even faster and more efficient forms of communication. It is noteworthy how quickly new inventions could be implemented in the Colombian territory: telex, fax, satellite, the internet, and cellular communications. Today Colombia is a nation within which the state may communicate with all of its inhabitants via different media that form the public system, and it may also use, when necessary, the wider-reaching and sophisticated private system that has been developed in Colombia by national and foreign entrepreneurs.

PRINT MEDIA

Finally, the print media must be considered among all media available to create a national consciousness among Colombians. Note, however, that few newspapers became truly national, while several thrived in particular regions. The capital of each department tended to produce news, and thus, in general, newspapers emerged there and communicated the local news to residents. These newspapers, with time and the onset of airmail, could be read in many parts of the country, allowing local news to be received in almost every region of the nation.

The written press and especially the daily newspaper were possible in Colombia only after several factors converged. First, news from other places needed to be known and consumed instantaneously; second, news needed to be transmitted with equal velocity through the printed papers; and third, the printed papers needed, in turn, to reach their readers. This is why the press was local in nature from the very moment it was created in Colombia during the last years of the eighteenth century to well into the first decades of the twentieth. Correspondents and especially subscribers in other cities existed, but the difficulties created by distance and the cost of transportation prevented national print journalism from developing. Thus, local publications of literary, scientific, and general interests predominated and were accompanied by a plethora of pamphlets and libel-ridden documents. But this did not prevent significant technical improvements from developing in the printing press. From the mid-nineteenth century, lithography was introduced in Bogotá, and much later, in 1881, an illustrated newspaper (by Alberto Urdaneta) included elaborate illustrations and images created through engravings. By 1911, the linotype technique allowed for the emergence of daily newspapers that could be produced quickly with reduced costs.

The telegraph, as mentioned above, first allowed for almost immediate information gathering in other parts of the country and the world. Eventually, a world network developed that included national and international correspondents and was facilitated through the purchasing of news from emerging international news agencies. The content of newspapers soon became newsworthy; however, periodicals did not become national until the system of transportation could guarantee that subscribers would receive their papers in their homes no matter where they resided in the country. The possibility of transforming a periodical from a weekly to a daily publication implied not only technical solutions but also economic investment. This was achieved when distribution reached other cities of the nation, and of course, shipment by air was a key solution. It is important to mention two additional conditions that contributed as much as technology to the circulation of newspapers at the national and regional levels: the progress in national literacy rates, which expanded the number of possible readers, and the need to form public opinion, a process that required information to sway the public concerning a particular situation. These factors allowed for an increasing generalization and sharing of information to shape opinions in towns and cities. Thus, institutions—the state and the church to offer two historical examples, but also schools and other places of social exchange, such as the café and the plaza—brought together more and more people to discuss and exchange important political, social, and intellectual ideas.

The Colombian newspapers that became national through extensive circulation reflect the power of the Colombian capital city. Based in Bogotá, the national newspapers carry mostly news from the nation's capital and its environs. This circumstance is not limited to the past; it continues today. Communal identities are forged by making national news out of events that happen to only a few individuals living in the capital city. In this way, the business of Bogotá becomes the business of Colombia.

One of the most prominent nationally circulating newspapers today is *El Espectador*, which was founded in 1887 in Medellín but later moved its headquarters to Bogotá, the city where it acquired its Liberal leanings and national circulation network. *El Tiempo* was founded in Bogotá more than one hundred years ago, in 1911. Today, it is the paper with the largest circulation in the country and the most influential voice in public opinion; its orientation is openly Liberal. *El Siglo*, now known as *El Nuevo Siglo*, or "The New Century," is published in Bogotá and is of a Conservative political leaning. It was founded by conservative leader Laureano Gómez in 1936 as a mechanism for counterbalancing the power of the Liberals in the presidential administration beginning in 1930. *La República*, another national paper published in Bogotá and of an equally Conservative political bent, was founded by Mariano Ospina Pérez in 1954. Today, this paper is the most influential paper that specializes in economic affairs.

The regional press, given its place of origin and the specific sociocultural dynamics of those places, addresses the readership in the areas where it principally circulates. But, as previously mentioned, people who live in other areas of the country, especially if they move, also read particular regional newspapers. Among them it is important to mention *El Colombiano*, a Conservative newspaper founded in Medellín in 1912; *El Heraldo* of Barranquilla, established in 1933; *El País*, created in Cali in 1950; *Vanguardia Liberal*, of Bucaramanga, founded in 1919; *La Patria*, in print in Manizales beginning in 1921; and, among others, *El Nuevo Liberal*, published in Popayán, which has been in circulation since 1938.

Colombia's complex geography has presented obstacles to national unification, and one of the greatest challenges for the Colombian people has been to create governmental, economic, and communications systems that allow for some sense of unification. The historical record is mixed, but the construction of a national road network, the widespread use of the airplane in the twentieth century, and the adaptation of the radio, television, and internet to the social and political realities of the nation have allowed for slow yet sustained economic development despite seemingly insurmountable physical obstacles. The ongoing challenge involves creating mechanisms to distribute more adequately and share the richness of the Colombian nation with all Colombian citizens.

Chapter Nine

Cultural Dynamism

Colombia's cultural production has been incredibly diverse, drawing on regional distinctions and identities with manifest ties to the country's sociopolitical realities. This chapter focuses on uniquely Colombian contributions to world culture, emphasizing plastic arts (painting and sculpture), literature, theater, architecture, and music. During much of the twentieth century, Colombian achievements in these areas were virtually unknown to those outside the country, due in large measure to political tensions in Colombia and, as one historian has written, the centrifugal force of "the enormous vogue of things Mexican."[1] Mexican art, particularly the postrevolutionary muralist movement, captivated the world and overshadowed production in other regions of Latin America. The literary world at the turn of the twentieth century, when it focused on Latin America, featured a few Latin American modernists—Rubén Darío from Nicaragua, José Martí in Cuba, and José Enrique Rodó in Uruguay—but it was not until the late 1960s that Colombian literature achieved international acclaim with the publication in 1967 of Gabriel García Márquez's sweeping, monumental *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Colombian theater, influenced by European existentialism, emerged with a national identity but not until the 1950s. The contributions of Colombian architects were, until recently, generally overlooked as critics focused on the construction of Brazil's new capital city in the 1950s, the influence of the Swiss modernist Le Corbusier in the south of Latin America, the construction of a University City in Mexico, and the colonial Baroque splendor found in Lima, Havana, Mexico City, and Quito. Colombia and Colombians have rarely been mentioned as adding original or unique value to world architecture. Colombia's impact on world music is important, but Colombia cannot claim anyone (when considering elite music) of the stature of Alberto Ginastera (the Argentine pianist and composer), Heitor Villa-Lobos (the Brazilian

composer), the Cuban Ernesto Lecuona, or the Mexican Carlos Chávez. However, unique Colombian popular music is found in the coastal *cumbia*, the western plains music called *música llanera*, and the north central plains folk music called *vallenato*.

SCULPTURE AND PAINTING

In the *artes plásticas*, loosely defined as painting and sculpture, Colombia's tradition is deep and diverse. The first-time visitor to Bogotá typically visits the Museo del Oro (Gold Museum) in the city center and begins to understand the immense talent of the pre-Columbian artisans, of what is today Colombia. The incredibly detailed, filigree goldwork on display, which predates the arrival of the Spaniards by centuries, suggests a level of craftsmanship, patience, and attention to detail that is the marker of sophisticated, highly structured civilizations. The arrival of the Europeans meant that gold and other precious metals and stones found in Colombia would be used to venerate the Catholic Church, Church traditions, and saints. Thus, one of the most impressive religious sculptures from the eighteenth century is found in Colombia, at the Museo del Banco de la República. Colloquially known as *la lechuga*, or "the head of lettuce," the sculpture, designed to hold the consecrated host during the Catholic mass, is made of 1,485 emeralds and 4,900 grams of gold inlaid with pearls, diamonds, and other precious stones. This object was created between 1700 and 1707 for the community of Catholic priests known as the Jesuits, but the Jesuits sold the piece to the Colombian nation in 1985; the money from the sale helped initiate the Jesuit Plan de Paz, or "peace initiative," in the 1980s. The sculpture is a clear reminder of the direct link between art and politics in Colombia.

An exemplary and stunningly original visual record of Colombia's tropical flora, fauna, and topographical beauty is seen in the drawings of a Spanish physician, José Celestino Mutis, who arrived in what is today Colombia in 1760 and died there forty-eight years later. His impressive collection of drawings was confiscated in 1816 during the independence wars and sent to Spain. They remained there, undiscovered, for some 150 years.[2] Approximately 5,300 drawings were recorded on folio sheets and represent a foundational, visual mapping of New Granada. Mutis was not the only European captivated by Colombia's geography and natural beauty. The German scientist Alexander von Humboldt took a five-year journey (1799–1804) to Cuba, northern South America, and Mexico. He was interested in scientific questions especially related to climate, ocean currents, rivers, and valleys, and his drawings helped Europeans to imagine, with more clarity, the natural wonders of

Latin America. Humboldt found especially compelling the Central *cordillera* (mountain range) of Colombia, which connects Bogotá and the Ecuadorian capital city, Quito. Later, the Italian engineer-geographer Agustín Codazzi spent ten years in Colombia, from 1850 to 1859, mapping the territory and studying its physical and human geography. He assembled a team of painters, mapmakers, botanists, and others; many of the stylized, folkloric watercolor drawings from his expeditions can be found today in the Colombian Biblioteca Nacional.

Not all Colombian art of the nineteenth century was based upon European scientific or mapping expeditions; the process of independence in Colombia generated an outpouring of artistic expression. The Colombian artist Pedro José Figueroa's *Simón Bolívar, Liberator and Father of the Nation* is held at the Quinta de Bolívar in Bogotá—the home and headquarters of the Liberator during the time he spent in Bogotá. The Colombian painter José María Espinosa produced many portraits of the Liberator, including a pencil sketch depicting a gaunt, defeated Bolívar completed shortly before his death on December 17, 1830. Bolívar was not the only hero of independence painted in the early nineteenth century: Policarpa Salavarrieta, heroine of the independence movement, who served as an informant for the insurgents and was executed by the Spaniards in 1817, was a popular artistic subject. An anonymous work housed at the National Museum in Bogotá depicts her final walk to martyrdom.[3]

The nineteenth-century art tradition in Colombia, influenced by the political process of independence and the work of the various scientific, mapping, and geographic missions from Europe, broke dramatically with the colonial tradition of art as religious art. Colombia's first art school, the Escuela de Bellas Artes, dates to 1886 during the period of conservative political ascendency known as the Regeneration; Bellas Artes served as a conduit through which the latest artistic trends of Europe, more specifically Madrid and Paris, would be received in the country. Modernism, which emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, flourished in places with expanding urban centers and an influx of European migrants. Not surprisingly, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, and Mexico City became important centers of Latin American modernism. Colombia, with a capital city some six hundred miles from the Caribbean coast, was not an important destination for nineteenth- and twentieth-century European migrants, and thus the modernist movement would never take a firm hold.

The country's first modernist painter—and director of the School of Fine Arts—was Andrés de Santamaría, a Bogotá-born artist who spent most of his life in Europe and died in Brussels in 1945. The art historian Jacqueline Barnitz describes him as the nation's first modernist for his "perverse color

combinations."[4] Santamaría's work was not well received in his native country during his lifetime, but changing tastes and sensibilities prevailed, and his reputation as a major force in Colombian art emerged during the 1960s, twenty-five years after his death.

Two painters from the western city of Medellín (not including Fernando Botero, who is discussed later) made a lasting contribution to Colombian art in the twentieth century. The muralist Pedro Nel Gómez created extraordinarily detailed renditions of Colombian history and culture, but his work was regionally focused on the forces that moved Medellín and the surrounding Department of Antioquia, that is, gold production, work, family life, and violence. His huge murals decorate the municipal building in downtown Medellín, and at the central Parque Berrío Metro station in Medellín the entire history of Antioquia is depicted in a uniquely Colombian homage to the famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera.

A controversial painter from the outskirts of Medellín, Débora Arango, who died in 2005 at the age of ninety-eight, offended the sensibilities of some conservative Catholic Colombians with her stark depiction of the female body. She also criticized official society with art that was strongly political: in one painting, she depicted the Colombian president Laureano Gómez as a fat toad. She confronted the Roman Catholic Church in her work and did not shy away from depicting the country's violence. Arango painted during most of the twentieth century and came to be viewed, after initial setbacks and criticisms (including the closing of one of her shows in Franco's Spain), as a daring and creative representative of Colombian art.[5]

Colombians who had a major impact on Colombian and Latin American sculpture in the twentieth century include Edgar Negret and Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar. Negret was born in 1920 in Popayán, in the southwest of Colombia, and spent a good deal of time (c. 1948–1963) living abroad, mostly in New York, Paris, and Barcelona, but he returned to Colombia in 1963. He served as a cultural emissary for artists in Europe, Colombia, and the United States, and one of his pieces, *Dinamismo*, "[an] eight-foot-long exterior structure," is found at the corner of 7th Avenue and 72nd Street in Bogotá, outside the entrance to the Banco Ganadero.[6] Similarly, Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, born in 1922 in Pamplona, Colombia, lived abroad, training and visiting studios in France, Spain, and Italy; he also spent considerable time in New York City, and in 1973 he produced a piece titled "De Colombia a John F. Kennedy" (From Colombia to John F. Kennedy), a modernist tribute to the late president who visited Colombia in 1961. The piece sits on the grounds of the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

Ana Mercedes Hoyos, born in Bogotá in 1942 (d. 2014), was a renowned Colombian artist whose paintings, drawings, and photographs captured, more

than other Colombian artists, the essence, colors, and texture of the north Colombian coast and the dignity of the people who live and work there. In addition to Hoyos, the work of four male painters provides a broad perspective of Colombia's twentieth-century artistic production: that of Enrique Grau, Alejandro Obregón, Luis Caballero, and Fernando Botero.

Enrique Grau, raised in Cartagena, was born in 1920 and died in Bogotá in 2004. Self-taught as a painter, he achieved international fame with his paintings influenced by European baroque. Like many acclaimed artists of his day, he traveled to Italy and France and was warmly received in New York, where his work was presented at MOMA (Museum of Modern Art) and at the Guggenheim. Alejandro Obregón (1920–1995) was born in Spain to a Spanish mother and Colombian father. The artist settled in Colombia after 1955, at Cartagena on the north coast; he lived in the south of France during the early years of La Violencia. Obregón tackled the Colombian violence directly in his work. In fact, he dedicated a series of paintings to the violence, as a form of visual journalism, much in the same way as the contemporary Colombian painter Fernando Botero completed and displayed a controversial series of drawings based on the U.S. military's Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal in Iraq in 2004. One of the principal pieces of Obregón's series, *Detalle de un genocidio*, is on display at the Museo Banco de la República in Bogotá; the piece depicts, in a somewhat abstract fashion, the dead body of a pregnant woman.

Luis Caballero, unlike Débora Arango, focused on the male nude and died at fifty-two years of age in 1995 in Paris. He left his homeland as a twenty-six-year-old and never returned to live in Colombia. Early in his life, Caballero learned that Colombian sensitivities were not aligned with his work, and he found a more receptive audience in Europe. But when conservative tastes and Catholic Church condemnations fell out of fashion during the late 1960s and 1970s, Caballero was recognized as a master and an important representative of Colombian cultural development. This changing Colombian artistic mood can be attributed, in large part, to the work of the Argentine art critic and *alta-patrona* Marta Traba, who helped introduce abstraction and other European, Latin American Southern Cone, and U.S. artistic trends to Colombia. She spent considerable time in Bogotá and is principally associated with the founding of the MAMBO—Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá.

The most famous and internationally acclaimed Colombian painter, Fernando Botero, was born in Medellín in 1932 and now lives in Italy. His work is easily recognizable: his expressive, overweight figures and still-life paintings are popular throughout the Western world, and Botero is one of the most financially successful artists of his generation in Colombia and in the world. His work is political in a subtle and playful way; he depicts military

and church officials as "portly," suggesting an exaggerated sense of self-importance of these historic institutions. Botero's sculptures and paintings are found in the most important galleries throughout the world; the Museo Nacional (Bogotá) houses a significant collection of the painter's works. However, the most complete collections of Botero's paintings and bronze sculptures are found at the Museo Donación Botero in Bogotá and the Museo de Antioquia in Medellín. In 2000, the artist donated to the museum in Bogotá 123 pieces of his work and eighty-five pieces from his personal collection, including works by Chagall, Picasso, Robert Rauschenberg, and the French impressionists. He donated a similar number of works to the Museo de Antioquia in his hometown of Medellín, transforming overnight the two Colombian cities into important centers of contemporary Western art. Botero's strong sense of regional identity is found in virtually all of his work, and his donation helped reform the urban center of Medellín. The Museo de Antioquia was inaugurated in 2004, in an elegant downtown art deco building that served as the main municipal building for the region. The year 2004 coincided with a second massive endowment by Botero and the construction of the Plaza de Las Esculturas (Sculpture Plaza, better known as "Plaza Botero") in front of the museum, which displays dozens of Botero's large bronze sculptures.

LITERATURE

Colombian creative capacity extends to other areas of the arts: the leading literary figure in Colombia and, arguably, in all of Latin America is the Colombian Gabriel García Márquez, a man with a prodigious literary talent who was recognized by the Nobel Committee in 1982. García Márquez is one of two Colombians to have won the Nobel Prize and one of only six Latin Americans to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Gabriel García Márquez, born in 1927 in the north coast town of Aracataca (he died on April 17, 2014, in Mexico City), was the product of a long, rich literary tradition in Colombia, and his major work, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) is a reflection of *realismo mágico*, where the magical and the real are largely indistinguishable. Many Colombians consider García Márquez a national treasure and an evident example of the creative impulse of the Colombian people; others view him with indifference, believing that his worldwide fame overshadowed the accomplishments of the many other extraordinary Colombian writers who have produced excellent work in the twentieth century. This schizophrenic appreciation is evident, for instance, in the third edition of the frequently cited *Manual de Historia de Colombia* (4th edition, 1992), where, in an eighty-nine-page chapter titled "La Literatura Colombiana en el siglo

XX" ("Colombian Literature in the Twentieth Century"), by Rafael Gutiérrez Girardot, García Márquez is mentioned once—in a single sentence.

Before García Márquez, modern Colombian literary production can be considered by focusing on five important writers/intellectuals: the poet José Eusebio Caro; the writer Soledad Acosta de Samper, who was an early advocate for women's (formal) education in Colombia; and the poet José Asunción Silva. The most important novelist of the nineteenth century, Jorge Isaacs, produced the romantic novel *María*, and José Eustasio Rivera bridged the two centuries (1888–1928) and penned his powerful political novel *La vorágine* in 1924 (translated to English as *The Vortex*).

José Eusebio Caro lived for thirty-six years during the earliest days of the republic; he was a politician, essayist, journalist, and romantic poet. The Latin American legacy of fusing literary aspirations (in this case, poetry) and politics seems to have been established with Caro, who was one of the founders of the modern Conservative Party in Colombia. His poetry, much of it highly stylized, was early nineteenth-century romantic in tone. He composed love elegies to Blasina Tobar, daughter of a distinguished Conservative family. Caro's poetry seems outdated and anachronistic by today's standards ("No soy feliz; tu amor, que es mi tesoro/Es quien me roba mi quietud también")[7]; but the combination of literary sensibility, journalistic expression, and political ambition became a coherent, practical paradigm for Latin American political leaders. In societies with limited access to education, a hierarchical model of leadership, and a general mistrust among the social classes, those who rose to prominence politically through elevated speech and writing began their "political campaigns" by publishing their ideas in essay format in newspapers or pamphlets. In the United States, there have been presidents who have demonstrated great skill as writers, including Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Barack Obama, but citizens of the United States do not identify these men first and foremost as "writers." In Colombia and Latin America, literary erudition translated—not always well—to statesmanship and a pathway to political power. This was certainly the case with at least two Colombian presidents, the well-known writers José Manuel Marroquín and Marco Fidel Suárez. Suárez assumed the presidency in 1918, and his opponent that year was the noted modernist poet Guillermo Valencia.

A nineteenth-century writer with keen antecedent political insights was Soledad Acosta de Samper, who has been described as the "most influential female writer in New Granada during the nineteenth century."[8] She was an early Latin American advocate for women's participation in society. Her upbringing was hardly normative for nineteenth-century Latin America; her father was Joaquín Acosta, a hero of the independence period, and her mother was Caroline Kemble Rowe, who was born in Kingston, Jamaica.

Acosta traveled widely as a young girl, learned to speak French and English fluently, and married José María Samper, an important politician and intellectual. Acosta de Samper was an essayist, journalist, travel writer, social commentator, and novelist. Her first book, published in 1869, is titled *Novelas y cuadros de la vida suramericana.* She also published novels that were written from the perspective of strong female protagonists, and she generally tasked her female characters to "search for self-knowledge through experience."[9] Acosta de Samper is considered a leading early pioneer in calling for equal treatment for women, and she insisted on the intellectual capacity of women at a time and in a place where such matters were rarely discussed.

Colombia's most renowned novelist of the nineteenth century was Jorge Isaacs (1837–1895), who wrote one of the most important romantic novels of the nineteenth century, *María*. Isaacs fought in the Colombian civil war of 1860–1862 and recorded, in lush detail, life on a plantation in the southwestern area of the country, in what is today the Cauca Valley. He published this "foundational fiction"[10] in 1867, establishing himself as a leading literary figure in the Americas, a sort of Colombian Mark Twain.

Poetry has always animated Colombian intellectual life, and one of the most important Colombian poets of the later part of the nineteenth century was the mercurial, morose José Asunción Silva, who died by suicide at age thirty-one in 1896. He wrote romantic, sentimental poetry, much of which, it seems, was directed toward his sister, Elvira, whose death in 1892 sent Silva into a downward spiral of despair. His poem "Nocturno III," part of which is reproduced below (followed by our translation to English), reflects the mood of both the author and his time period:

Esta noche
Solo, el alma
Llena de las infinitas amarguras y agonías de tu muerte
Separado de ti misma, por la sombra, por el tiempo y la distancia,
Por el infinito negro,
Donde nuestra voz no alcanza,
Solo y mudo
Por la senda caminaba—

This night
Alone, the soul
Full of infinite bitterness and agonies of your death
Separated from you, by the shadow, by time and distance,
By the infinite void,
Where our voices never reach,
Alone and mute
By this road I wandered—

Silva enjoyed a revival, mostly among university students in Bogotá, on the one-hundredth anniversary of his death; poetry readings, celebrations, and competitions marked the occasion in 1996, and to this day, the Casa de Poesía Silva in the historic colonial neighborhood of Bogotá, La Candelaria, operates as an important cultural center and is a monument to the country's literary tradition and tastes, which tend to favor poetry.

In 1924 José Eustasio Rivera published the important sociopolitical novel *La vorágine*. This novel, which indicted the "rubber barons" and their abusive treatment of poor rubber workers in the Amazon, fused elements of the American journalistic novel pioneered by Upton Sinclair with the work of Brazilian naturalist writer and reporter Euclides da Cunha, who opened up (metaphorically speaking) the Brazilian interior to elites who lived along that nation's coast. *La vorágine* helped merge the disciplines of Colombian journalism and fiction writing; this art form would be perfected, later on, by Gabriel García Márquez. Tragically, Rivera died in 1928, at forty years of age, after suffering a series of seizures in New York City. He went to New York hoping to find an English-language publisher for his work.

One year before the death of Rivera, Gabriel García Márquez was born in a rural area of the Colombian Caribbean coast into a family of colorful characters who would form the foundation for most of his fiction. García Márquez's immense popularity and fame, in Latin America and the world, diverted critical reflection from other significant twentieth-century Colombian writers, including García Márquez's closest friend, the writer Álvaro Mutis. The remainder of this segment on Colombian literature will focus on six twentieth-century writers: Tomás Carrasquilla, Álvaro Mutis, Manuel Zapata Olivella, Fernando Vallejo, Laura Restrepo, and García Márquez.

Tomás Carrasquilla was born in Santo Domingo, Antioquia, in 1858; he died eighty-two years later in Medellín. He lived most of his life in Medellín, though he worked, reluctantly, in the Colombian capital for a number of years. Unlike many contemporary Colombian artists, Carrasquilla remained in Colombia his entire life and was unimpressed with the fashions, literary tastes, or happenings of Paris and New York. One of his biographers, the Canadian literary scholar Kurt Levy, pointed out that the author's "domain was reality, as reflected in Antioquia, its people and its landscape."[11] His novels and stories came from Antioquia, much like the stories of García Márquez reflect the customs, traditions, and history of Colombia's north coast. Carrasquilla's life has been described by Levy as "uneventful," but this author of stories reflecting the quotidian "trivia"[12] of life in Antioquia reminds the reader of the remarkable power of setting in fiction and the power of literature to capture and distill that which is essential to a region's identity.

A Colombian writer with a rich, varied, and complex life (he worked as a public relations executive for Standard Oil and as a sales manager for Twentieth Century Fox and Columbia Pictures in Latin America; he was a prisoner in Mexico for fifteen months—jailed by the Rojas Pinilla administration—and is now known as a writer of short fiction, poetry, and novellas—is Bogotá-born Álvaro Mutis. Mutis, like García Márquez, spent most of his life in Mexico City, and died there in 2013. He became internationally renowned later in life, at the age of about sixty-two, when he published the novella *La Nieve del Almirante*, which turned into a seven-part series of novellas, translated and published in English as *The Adventures and Misadventures of Maqroll*. These captivating novellas reflect the author's international perspective—that is, they are not centered in Colombia or Mexico but take the reader on a variety of monumental journeys that force a comparison with Don Quixote, though Mutis set his novellas in contemporary time.

Manuel Zapata Olivella was born in 1920 in Lorica, Colombia, and died in Bogotá in 2004. He was one of the earliest Afro-Colombian writers to achieve international literary acclaim. He traveled throughout the Americas and Europe, taught literature at the University of Kansas in the 1970s, and lectured widely on Latin American literature, identity, and culture. His friends included the great Peruvian writer Ciro Alegría, who wrote the prologue to the Colombian's novel *Tierra*, and American poet Langston Hughes. Zapata Olivella's travels are recounted in two works, *Pasión vagabunda* (1953) and its sequel, *He visto la noche*. These works are important commentaries on the treatment of outsiders (in this case, a dark-skinned Colombian man); *Pasión* takes the reader from Bogotá through Central America to Mexico, and *He visto la noche* moves from Mexico to the urban United States in the 1950s. They are critically important works that combine ethnological observation, literary skill, and precise social commentary during the 1950s as the United States was wrestling with the contradictions of segregation, while people in both the U.S. North and South pushed for a more forward-thinking, modern social agenda. Zapata Olivella witnessed all of this and wrote about it as a Colombian, as a black man, as an intellectual.

The controversial Colombian writer Fernando Vallejo has spent the majority of his life living outside of Colombia. Born in 1942, he moved to Mexico in 1971; in fact, in 2007, shortly after the re-election of President Álvaro Uribe (and after having secured citizenship from the Mexican government), Vallejo renounced his Colombian citizenship in a noisy, histrionic outburst that infuriated many Colombians. His 1994 novel, *La virgen de los sicarios,* is a compact, powerfully unsentimental description of the life of teenage hired assassins and their Medellín milieu; the book was released in English translation in 2001 as *Our Lady of the Assassins* and was adapted into a major

motion picture directed by the German Barbet Schroeder in 2000. Vallejo's work is a reflection of the side of Medellín that many in polite society would rather forget, and the author represents an important common denominator in Colombian literary currents: writers who have used the objective reality of familiar surroundings to create works of stark simplicity (in this case) or intricate complexity (García Márquez) without becoming excessively academic or intellectually aloof.

Colombian writer Laura Restrepo (born in Bogotá in 1950) has received international recognition in recent years. Restrepo began her career as a journalist and social critic. Her 2004 novel, *Delirium,* received wide critical acclaim and cast new light on her earlier work, especially the 1993 novel, *Leopard in the Sun*. *Leopard* helped readers understand the onset of the Colombian drug export business, focusing on the 1970s marijuana trade out of Santa Marta. In many significant ways, Restrepo's career path follows that of fellow Colombian Gabriel García Márquez: they were animated by journalism, politically active and outspoken on matters pertaining to the conflict in Colombia, and were involved in helping to solve the supposedly intransigent political problems of their native country. For example, García Márquez helped write the new Colombian constitution of 1991, and Restrepo was recruited by President Belisario Betancur in the early 1980s to promote dialogue with leftist insurgents in advance of his Peace Plan, which largely fell apart in the November 1985 Palace of Justice tragedy.

Colombian literary achievement has been overshadowed by the negative headlines and reports from that nation and by the enormous fame of the nation's vaunted literary star, Gabriel García Márquez. Hardly an aloof prima donna, García Márquez worked to promote young Colombian writers, his brotherly friendship with Álvaro Mutis endured up until Mr. Mutis's death, and he set up an acclaimed school to support journalism in Cartagena called Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoaméricano—FNPI (Foundation for New Ibero-American Journalism). Colombian literature, as suggested above, flourished and would have flourished without Gabriel García Márquez, but world literature has certainly been enriched by the work of the "roving and nostalgic Colombian" born in Aracataca in 1927.

Two Colombian writers who have achieved international acclaim in the "post-García Márquez" period are Bogotá-born (1973) writer Juan Gabriel Vásquez and Héctor Abad Faciolince (born in 1958, Medellín). Vásquez received wide recognition for his novel *The Sound of Things Falling*, which narrates the complex friendship between Antonio Yammara and Ricardo Laverde—who had been a prisoner for twenty years. The novel takes the reader through the early years of narco-trafficking in Colombia, and, makes

reference to an infamous airline accident in the nation, that of American Airlines flight 965, which crashed near Cali in December 1995.

Héctor Abad Faciolince wrote a searing memoir which is sort of a love letter to his father, Héctor Abad Gómez, gunned down in Medellín by paramilitary forces. That book, which was published in English (2013) as *Oblivion: A Memoir* helped readers understand the tragedy of 1980s Colombia where a peaceful, progressive public health expert could be killed for demanding clean water and access to breakfast foods for poor schoolchildren.

THEATER

The Colombian theater has undergone a radical transformation over the past seventy-five years. Prior to the Second World War, Colombian theater was primarily an elite discourse that focused on safe, predictable religious themes that were neither controversial nor innovative, designed to appease elite sensibilities and not to offend the Catholic Church censure apparatus. The Teatro de Cristobal Colón in Bogotá, reinaugurated in 1892 to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America (hence the name *Cristobal Colón*, Spanish for Christopher Columbus), situated in the center of Bogotá, became a place to promote political and literary discussions, poetry readings, musical performances, and operas. During the first years of the twentieth century, works of drama, often written by the leading political figures of the day, were designed to be read among friends rather than presented onstage before an audience.

Antonio Álvarez Lleras was perhaps the most notable Colombian writing for the theater during the first third of the twentieth century. Much of his work was staged through the theater company he created called *Renacimiento*, or "Renaissance." Two of his early works—*Víboras sociales* (*Social Snakes*, 1911) and *Como los muertos* (*Just Like the Dead*, 1916)—were later adapted to the cinema; the advent of Colombian cinema reinforced and intersected with the work of playwriting during the first thirty years of the twentieth century.

The actor and theater director Víctor Mallarino, during the middle of the twentieth century, deeply influenced Colombian theater as director of the National School of Dramatic Art. But dramatic events occurred that would forever change Colombian theater: during a ten-year period, from 1945 to 1955, Bertolt Brecht was introduced to Colombia, the "nueve de abril" occurred, and modernist journalism, literature, and theater coalesced in an innovative journal called *Mito*, which was edited by the poet Jorge Gaitán Durán and literary critic Hernando Valencia Goelkel.

Mito would be compared to the journal *Sur* published in Buenos Aires and directed by Victoria Ocampo (Jorge Luis Borges collaborated) and *Orígenes* in Havana, founded by José Lezama Lima and José Rodríguez Feo. But unlike Argentina and Cuba, Colombia received a relatively low number of European immigrants during the first fifty years of the twentieth century, so *Mito* was designed to bring Europe to Colombia, that is, to organize and translate the current intellectual trends in Europe and publish those ideas in Bogotá. Leading modernist thinkers, including Brecht, Sartre, and Beckett, were among the European authors published in *Mito*. Brecht became the central influential figure in the emerging and modernizing Colombian theater scene. The young intellectuals who published the journal truly believed that culture, literature, and modernist theater and political thought represented the most efficacious accelerant for Colombians' political and social development. They were trying to break away from the "old guard," which in their minds was characterized by the "nueve de abril," La Violencia, and decades of political and social intransigence.

Though *Mito* helped to transmit and translate European theater and literary trends to Colombia, a new generation of theater directors produced astonishingly original work, focusing on Colombia's social and political reality, or at least the reality they perceived. Enrique Buenaventura (1923–2003) founded and led the TEC—Teatro Experimental de Cali—and is considered one of the most important twentieth-century playwrights and theater directors in Latin America. Theater in Colombia during this time became a forum through which to engage the Colombian political and social conditions. *Mito* might have introduced European modernism in the mid-1950s, but twenty years later, Buenaventura and others were creating theater productions that were grounded in the country's contemporary crisis. Thus, *Los papeles del infierno* (*Documents from Hell*), a series of one-act plays that explored the human rights crisis in Colombia, moved far away from elite-inspired "salon" theater. According to one scholar, Buenaventura was one of the many directors who "found that the Marxist-inspired 'collective' could create theater directed to large 'popular' audiences rather than the small clique of cultural elites who dominated the national cultural arena."[13]

A wide array of theater companies during this time period, influenced by the political proclivity of Colombian theater, flourished in Colombia, especially in the capital city, including the TPB—Teatro Popular de Bogotá—and the Teatro de La Candelaria. In 1974, the TPB, in collaboration with Candelaria, staged a political work titled *I Took Panama*, which satirically commented on the separation of Panama, sharply critiquing the Colombian ruling Conservative elites of the time period, the U.S. Marines, and, of course, U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt. The work demonstrated the Colombian

penchant for combining humor and satire to level serious criticism of political rulers, their predecessors, and policies.

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is one area that is sometimes overlooked by those considering the creative capacity of the Colombian people. Most first-time visitors to Bogotá see the main plaza, named after Simón Bolívar, and learn that the beautiful neoclassical "Capitolio" that forms the southern segment of the square took more than eighty years to complete. Construction began in 1847 and was not completed until 1928. Plans for this capitol building were developed by the Caribbean-born architect Thomas Reed, who also developed plans for the Panóptico Municipal, which is today the National Museum at 7th Avenue and 32nd Street. That project was begun in 1874. In 1883 the first urban park in Colombia was inaugurated in the capital city, the *Parque del Centenario*—"Centenary Park." All of these projects were functional, designed to help provide modernization, harmony, and stability to the nation; the capitol building would house the Colombian Congress, the Panóptico served as the jail, and the Centenary Park facilitated outdoor, healthy, public recreation. At this time period, public parks became popular with urban designers throughout the Americas, who saw them as part of the civilizing program of the modern city. Perhaps the most famous urban park, New York's Central Park, initially opened in 1857, and work continued, hewing closely to plans developed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, until final completion of the project in 1873.

A couple of important urbanization projects were organized and completed in Bogotá during the twentieth century: the first led to the creation of the Ciudad Universitaria (University City), on the outskirts of downtown Bogotá; the second was a massive housing project, designed to provide safe lower and middle-class housing for the growing urban population in the era of rural violence and prior to family planning.

The National University of Colombia at Bogotá was designed in 1936 as a large park, with space for experimentation with agronomy and agriculture, animal husbandry, and other sciences important to Colombia at that time. The modernist feel of the campus is attributed to a series of innovative architects, among them the German Leopold Rother, who implemented Bauhaus elements in the campus design.[14]

"Ciudad Kennedy"—named for President John F. Kennedy, who visited Bogotá in 1961 and offered funds to help promote social development—was initially planned in the 1960s to house about eighty thousand residents on

the western outskirts of Bogotá. Ciudad Kennedy, now an urban sector, is home to more than a million residents; the planning phase during the 1960s and 1970s represented an earnest effort on behalf of Colombian architects, social scientists, and urban planners to create safe, pleasant urban housing for the working class. A rapidly growing population, though, overwhelmed the best-laid plans, and today "Kennedy" is a densely populated, chaotic section of the city, distinct from the idyllic, peaceful community envisioned some sixty years ago.

The contemporary architect who defined a unique Colombian architectural style was the French-born Rogelio Salmona (1929–2007), who studied for a decade in Paris under Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris, popularly known as Le Corbusier. Salmona's style is characterized by the use of red bricks manufactured using traditional artisanal methods from the red clay found in abundance near the Colombian capital city. Salmona spent time in Spain and was influenced by the stylized Moorish architecture, and so his work includes the use of decorative arches and intricate fountains. He designed many important buildings in Colombia and is perhaps best known for his residential apartment complex in the center of Bogotá, the Torres del Parque, which circle the "Plaza de Toros"—the Bogotá bullring. He also designed the National Archives Building, the Virgilio Barco Public library—both in Bogotá—and the Cartagena home of the writer Gabriel García Márquez. Salmona's final project, completed after his death, is a cultural center, the Centro de Cultura Gabriel García Márquez, in the middle of the colonial neighborhood of Bogotá.

MUSIC

Music is an important component of any discussion of Colombian creative capacity. Unique among Latin American countries, Colombian music has emerged into the international mainstream with some contemporary artists including Juanes (né Juan Esteban Aristizábal Vásquez) and Shakira (née Isabel Mebarak Ripoll), who command worldwide audiences. The wide variety of musical traditions in Colombia reflects the regional diversity of the nation. Music from the north coast, for example, is completely distinct from music that is connected to the *llanos*, or eastern plains.

Though Colombia is recognized as a pioneer and leader in popular music, the nation also holds a rich and varied classical music tradition. Concerning European-based classical music, Guillermo Uribe Holguín is regarded as the most influential at the turn of the twentieth century; like his contemporaries in other areas of Latin America, most notably Brazil's Heitor Villa-Lobos,

Uribe Holguín's work introduced unique nationalist elements in terms of melody and rhythm, especially his *Trozos en el sentimento popular*—a collection of three hundred piano pieces written between 1927 and 1939.[15]

Colombia's counterpart to Brazilian samba, Argentine tango, and Mexican *ranchera* music is the *cumbia*. British anthropologist Peter Wade's 2000 book, *Music, Race and Nation*, is a critical analysis of the coastal origins of this music, connecting *cumbia* (the term probably originated in the late nineteenth century) to the nation's Afro-Colombian populations. *Cumbia* has become popular throughout the Americas in recent years, though the rhythm and dance is clearly associated with the Colombian coasts, Panama, and the coast of Ecuador. What unifies *cumbia* and its brass-band cousin, "*porro*" music, is an origin in the history and struggles of Afro-Colombian communities. The *cumbia* rhythms and dance, West African in origin, probably began in and around the north coast city of Cartagena, which served as the principal port of entry for enslaved Africans. The Colombian Luis Eduardo (Lucho) Bermúdez (d. 1994) was one of the most beloved composers and artists of Caribbean music; he was known for taking the African rhythms of the *porro* and performing them with a full orchestra. It might seem a bit of a stretch to refer to him as the Elvis Presley of Colombia, but he, like Elvis, made traditional black music "safe" and comfortable for middle-class *mestizos* and whites in the interior cities and throughout the Colombian nation.

The *vallenato*, according to Wade, originated in and around the city of Valledupar near the north coast and generally includes the accordion (an instrument introduced to Colombia in the late 1880s by German immigrants); it is folk poetry from the region put to music. The *vallenato* was popular among the working and lower middle classes in the countryside and cities and became an important form of popular—oftentimes melancholic—expression at parties, celebrations, or other gatherings. Originally performed by men, the *vallenato* gained new and immense popularity in the early 1990s, when a young performer, Carlos Vives from Santa Marta, made a recording of traditional *vallenatos* modified with a new, modern, upbeat tempo and performed by musicians trained in the *vallenato* tradition. His 1993 album, *Clásicos de la Provincia*, became an instant hit in Colombia, Latin America, and some parts of Europe and the United States. Many of the songs performed by Vives had been written earlier by the man considered the most important creator and promoter of the *vallenato*, Rafael Escalona, who was a Colombian singer, songwriter, politician, and diplomat. Escalona died in 2004 in Bogotá.

Bambuco music, considered by some as the national music of Colombia, originated in the Andean region of the nation, in and around the capital. In style, rhythm, and instrumentation, the bambuco imitated the European waltz and polka traditions developed in the mid-nineteenth century. *Bambuco* was

hailed as the "national" music of Colombia at a time period when the nation was attempting to define and forge a unique national identity.

A wholly unique music from the eastern plains, *música llanera*, is popular in the Colombian plains and Venezuela. *Música llanera*, also called *joropo* music, is characterized by the use of a small harp, *la arpa llanera*, which generates a sound singular to this regional style of music and dance. Similar to U.S. country music, the *joropo* is distinct to the cattle culture of the plains and is performed at regional events including rodeos, but it is strongly associated with the traditions and culture of the *llanos orientales*, the eastern plains of Colombia.

Colombian music received an infusion of oxygen in 2021 with the release of the Disney film *Encanto*. The film won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature at the 2022 awards and the soundtrack featured Colombian rhythms, the storyline focused on a matrilineal family structure and magical realism elements figured prominently in plot development. The success of the film was a sort of triumph for Colombian culture/music and aligned with a new narrative ethos for the nation—that of a nation struggling to achieve peace rooted in the deep cultural traditions that define the nation. Clearly, *Encanto* was a sort of culmination/triumph of a new generation of Colombian singer-songwriters, led by Barranquilla-born Lido Pimienta, who performs *cumbia* and is deeply influenced by the coastal Colombian Afro-Colombian musical traditions. José Álvaro Osorio Balvin (J Balvin) was born in Medellín, about the same time as Pimienta. Mr. Balvin has sort of "Colombianized" the reggaeton movement which moved from Panama to Puerto Rico from where it emerged as a pan-Caribbean musical style. J Balvin has had enormous international success, selling out stadiums, winning six Latin Grammy awards and collaborating with Cardi B, Bad Bunny and Pitbull, among others. A younger Medellín music phenomenon, Maluma (born Juan Luis Londoño Arias in 1994) has also achieved international recognition as reggaeton artist, performer, and writer. Maluma has collaborated with Shakira and Madonna; "Medellín," a duet with Maluma, is the first track on Madonna's *Madam X* LP (2019); more than fifty-six million fans have viewed the video of that song on YouTube.

This chapter has attempted to organize some of the unique characteristics of Colombian art and culture—a national and universal culture, strongly tied to the regions that shape Colombia's history. But the incredible diversity of the painting/sculpture, literary, theatrical, architectural, and musical traditions suggests a young, creative, and dynamic culture that is neither derivative nor imitative of European or U.S. culture. Colombians have been successful at creating literary works of astonishing originality, such as García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*; at the same time, they have been able to

incorporate, adapt, and innovate as only a *mestizo* nation can. Colombians are comfortable with the hybrid; their culture is not obsessed with pursuits that are purely intellectual, avant-garde, or otherwise divorced from the concerns of daily reality. Colombian culture, shaped by regional realities and restraints and the burdens of history, and conditioned by the serene wisdom of living day to day, is vibrant, often nostalgic, and sometimes uncertain. It is a metaphor for Colombian society.

NOTES

1. See Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920–1935* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1995).

2. See Maurico Nieto Olarte, "Ciencia imperial y ciencia criolla en el período de la Ilustración en el Nuevo Reino de Granada," in *Colombia: Preguntas y respuestas sobre su pasado y su presente*, eds. Diana Bonnett, Michael LaRosa, and Mauricio Nieto (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2010), 193–94.

3. Jacqueline Barnitz, *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 3.

4. Ibid., 35–36.

5. Juan Forero, "Débora Arango, 98, Painter of Politically Charged Themes, Dies," *New York Times*, December 13, 2005.

6. Barnitz, *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America*, 192.

7. Authors' translation from *El serafín y la mujer*: "I am not happy; your love, which is my treasure, is what also takes away my tranquility." From an unpublished paper by Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas titled "José Eusebio Caro y Blasina Tobar: La política, el amor conyugal, y la educación de los hijos."

8. Guiomar Dueñas-Vargas, "El Romanticismo: Las mujeres que escribian." Unpublished paper.

9. Ibid.

10. This phrase belongs to literary scholar Doris Sommer, whose 1991 book is titled *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

11. Kurt Levy, *Tomás Carrasquilla* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 124.

12. Ibid., 124, 126.

13. Diana Taylor and Sarah J. Townsend, eds., *Stages of Conflict: A Critical Anthology of Latin American Theater and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 245.

14. Alberto R. Saldarriaga and Lorenzo M. Fonseca, "Un siglo de arquitectura colombiana," in vol. 6 of *Nueva Historia de Colombia* (Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Editorial, S.A., 1989), 195.

15. Gerard H. Béhague, "Music, c. 1920–c. 1980," in *A Cultural History of Latin America*, ed. Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 321.

Chapter Ten

Daily Life

Daily life in Colombia varies dramatically, and what people do for recreation is shaped by social class, region, religious identity, and residency in urban versus rural sectors of the country. Few textbooks published in English deal with Colombian daily life, preferring to focus on violence, drug trafficking, and other lurid topics that frequently find their way into the Colombian evening news. This chapter seeks to explore the cultural forces that move Colombia and Colombians; for example, religious festivals and Catholic feast days are part of the rhythm of the Colombian calendar. The *puente*—the Monday holiday that serves as a "bridge" between the weekend and the workweek—is ubiquitous in the Colombian calendar and symbolizes the enduring strength of the nation's Roman Catholic identity. There are a total of twenty national holidays in Colombia—ten take the form of a *puente* (a Monday holiday that acts as a "bridge" between two weeks), and fourteen holidays are connected to the Catholic liturgical calendar. However, only the most devout Colombians know the name of the Catholic saint being honored on any given *puente*. Another cultural/social phenomenon is the soap opera. *Telenovelas* (soap operas) are watched by all segments of Colombian society, rich and poor alike. Some *telenovelas—Betty la fea*, for example—have been exported and translated into other languages and cultures. Colombian soap operas are shown at night, after work, coinciding with the dinner hour, which starts at about 7:30 p.m. in the cities.

This chapter focuses on Colombian popular culture, using examples from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. We cannot offer a complete analysis of the vast, rich, and fascinating cultural features that help define a unique Colombian cultural identity. While the writings of Gabriel García Márquez are representative of Colombian culture, so too are the *coleos*, or rodeos, found in many small towns but central to the cattle and cowboy culture of

the Colombian eastern plains. Fernando Botero's paintings are internationally known. They hang in the most prestigious museums and galleries in the world and reflect his upbringing in and around Medellín, but the Carnival de Barranquilla is a lived experience, celebrated in the streets of the Caribbean city by tens of thousands of Colombians every year before Lent.

POPULAR RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS

Roman Catholicism has been the dominant religious identification in Colombia, and up until 1991, with the ratification of a new Colombian constitution, Catholicism was the official religion of the nation. Today a decidedly more secular Colombia still retains the cultural sensation and regularly scheduled religious celebrations of Roman Catholicism. Colombian society, literally, was built around the ideals and priorities of the Catholic Church. Thus, virtually every town in the nation is anchored by a Roman Catholic church at the center. This includes the main cathedral at Bogotá, which forms the eastern side of the main plaza, the Plaza de Bolívar. But the institutional Roman Catholic Church, which is a political, social, and economic power broker in the nation, operates at a level distinct from and sometimes indifferent to popular Catholicism, as expressed in the variety of Carnival celebrations, pilgrimages to holy sites, and devotion to Catholic spiritual leaders (the Virgin Mary, Christ) via their popularized "Colombian" representations (i.e., the Virgin of Chiquinquirá, the Divino Niño Jesús).

The most important popular celebration in Colombia is the Carnival at Barranquilla. The celebration began in the late nineteenth century. Though the traditional Catholic Carnival dates back to medieval Europe, the New World manifestation, whether it is called Mardi Gras in New Orleans or Carnival in Rio de Janeiro, acknowledges the onset of Lent, the forty-day period of fasting and penance before remembrance of the crucifixion of Christ on the cross and the Easter ascension. The celebration before the fast has become more alluring as time has passed, and Barranquilla's carnival is a multicultural, sensuous, raucous street party that paralyzes the city for four days and brings in millions of dollars (and euros) from Colombian and foreign tourists. Carnival celebrations in Colombia follow, historically, the northern trajectory of the Magdalena River. An earlier Carnival was celebrated in the river port city of Mompox, a city eclipsed by the growth of Barranquilla. The modern carnival has lost any identification with or control by the Catholic Church; though its history is Catholic, the contemporary carnival is secularly spirited. It is a celebration of music, dance, the human body, and the exuberant joy that helps to unify this city, at least during a four-day period before Lent.

The Carnival at the southwestern city of Pasto is unique in that the celebration takes place during the period leading up to los Reyes Magos, or January 6, which Catholics celebrate as the day the three kings arrived to visit the newborn Christ at Bethlehem. In Pasto, this celebration is referred to as the *Carnival de Negros y Blancos*, or the "Carnival of Blacks and Whites," which has been recognized as a Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial (Cultural Heritage designation) by UNESCO. The celebration probably has its beginnings as a pre-Columbian agrarian celebration infused with African slave traditions—notably the recognition of January 5 as a "day free from work" that was granted through the Crown via official petition. On January 5, the city celebrates; people dress in black and paint their bodies with black face paint in celebratory solidarity with an official day of freedom from servitude. The next day, January 6, is *Día de los Blancos* ("White Day"), when celebrants apply talc to their faces and bodies to imitate whiteness. This is the final day of the celebration, the day of the arrival of the kings. This Carnival is fascinating in the way it attempts to reproduce the cultural heritage of the people who historically populated the city of Pasto and the region; indigenous elements, Afro-Colombian culture and traditions, and European history are brought together, all organized around the centralizing force and tradition of the Roman Catholic Church and Catholic liturgical calendar.

Another example of the intricacy of Colombian culture—and also the degree to which Colombians are an adaptive people, comfortable with synthesis—is the Carnival de Riosucio, or *La Fiesta del Diablo*, the "Devil's Festival," in the Department of Caldas. Riosucio combines Catholic tradition (it is a January celebration, designed to intersect with the arrival of the three kings on January 6) with a holiday inspired originally by indigenous agricultural festivals. The celebration became institutionalized in the mid-nineteenth century and reflects back to the Spanish conquest of the sixteenth century. The Riosucio Diablo is neither a cruel nor anti-Catholic devil. Rather, the devil and masks represent an integration of the three primary cultures in the region—indigenous, European, and African—reflecting the universality of the culture in Riosucio, Caldas. The festival suggests the celebratory nature of the people and the degree to which Colombians can create celebration and joy out of symbols and traditions designed to frighten and terrorize.

Two popular activities for the working classes in Bogotá are intercity pilgrimages of sorts. One is to a sanctuary, which was constructed between 1650 and 1657 at the top of a hill overlooking the savannah of Bogotá. This "Cerro de Monserrate" is at 3,152 meters above sea level, and people walk up a path to visit the statue of the "Señor de Monserrate," which is a depiction of the fallen, tortured Christ heading off to crucifixion. The truly devout make the pilgrimage on their knees, in recognition of Christ's suffering. At the site,

inexpensive food is available for purchase, Catholic mass is said regularly, and high-end restaurants are available for the more affluent Colombians and foreign tourists.

The "20 de Julio" is a lower-middle-class neighborhood in the south of Bogotá. There, in the early twentieth century, an Italian Silesian priest, Father John Del Rizzo, started worshiping the Christ child (Divino Niño Jesús, the "Divine Baby Jesus"), and a church was built in honor of the Christ child in the center of this neighborhood. The 20 de Julio is a popular pilgrimage site, and people from all over the city, from all classes of Colombian society, venture there, especially on Sunday, to attend mass, socialize, and seek the help of the baby Jesus to solve a social crisis, cure an illness, or assist with some other special need. The Divino Niño is depicted as a happy, light-skinned, blond-haired child, dressed in a pink tunic with his arms outstretched. He stands on a base inscribed with the Spanish "*Yo Reinaré*," or, simply, "I will reign." The symbol is important for contemporary Colombians, especially those living in the chaotic city of Bogotá with as many as eight million residents. Colombians visit the church and are comforted by the welcoming, embracing, and loving child who helps them not necessarily to forget about their daily problems but to focus on another dimension: the openness, warmth—filtered through childlike exuberance—that await all in the Kingdom of Christ.

Despite the historically strong ties between the Colombian nation and the Roman Catholic Church, there is only one Colombian saint, "La Madre Laura" (María Laura de Jesús Montoya Upegui), recently canonized in May 2013 by Pope Francis I. Madre Laura was born in 1874, in Jericó, a small town in Antioquia, Colombia; she died in the Antioquia capital city, Medellín, in 1949. An educator, Madre Laura dedicated her life to education in indigenous communities, particularly in the town and surrounding area of Dabeiba, Antioquia, where she worked with the Emberá-Katío. There are two Peruvian saints (Santa Rosa of Lima, San Martín de Porres) and ten Mexican Saints, the most recent "The Martyrs of Tlaxcala" were canonized in 2017 by Pope Francis. San Pedro Claver, the Spanish Jesuit who lived from 1580 to 1654 and spent most of his life ministering to arriving slaves at the port city of Cartagena, is a saint strongly associated with Colombia, but he was born in Europe. San Pedro Claver embraced the slaves and treated them with kindness upon their arrival to the slave-trading center, though he never fought against the institution of slavery. Still, for his time, he was unusual given the fact that he went out of his way to treat the newcomers as human beings, and the most important Jesuit church on the north coast of Colombia is dedicated to San Pedro; his mortal remains are entombed there, on the altar in a glass case for all to see.

SPORTS

Colombians of all social classes participate in sports, especially soccer, which became professionalized in 1948 in Colombia after a strike in Argentina forced many talented players in that nation to move to the Bogotá region. Soccer has been a source of immense joy and frustration for the Colombian people. In 1989, for example, the soccer squad from Medellín won the "Copa Libertadores"—the most important club competition in Latin America—but the team "Nacional" struggled under accusations of accepting illicit funds from Colombian drug kingpins. In 1994, Colombia qualified for World Cup competition in the United States. But the competition turned disastrous when Colombian midfielder Andrés Escobar committed an "own goal" and Colombia was eliminated from the tournament in a 2–1 loss to the United States. Almost immediately after returning to his native Medellín, Escobar was murdered outside a bar, presumably on order of those (or someone) who had lost money betting that Colombia would advance to the quarter finals of play. Uruguayan writer and intellectual Eduardo Galeano, an astute observer of contemporary Latin American culture, wrote a short book about soccer and, reflecting on the tragic murder of Escobar, shrewdly noted that "*La violencia no está en los genes del pueblo colombiano, pueblo celebrador de la vida, loco de alegrias musiqueras y futbolera*—violence is not in the genes of the Colombian people, a people who celebrate life, who are crazily happy about their music and soccer."[1]

Before the arrival of the Spaniards to America—natives in what today constitutes the Bogotá high plateau played a game called *tejo*. People still engage in this competition, usually on Sundays or feast days, and the matches are usually accompanied by an alcoholic beverage (a fermented corn beverage called *chicha*; today the beverage of choice is beer). *Tejo* is a curious game that involves throwing a metal or iron disc from a distance into a box of clay packed with small gunpowder caps, or *mechas*. The player who hits the most *mechas* (which explode when struck) wins; *tejo* is generally played outdoors by men. *Tejo* was recognized as a national sport by law 613 of 2000—a recognition that has antecedents dating back to 1920—the year when the sport was included in the national games with the goal of introducing *tejo* to the private clubs in the capital city.

Colombians have excelled at a number of international sports. Bogotá-born Juan Pablo Montoya raced, from 2001 to 2006, with two Formula 1 teams and won at the highest level of world competition. The athletic, affable Colombian golfer Camilo Villegas has had success on the PGA tour, and Colombians have excelled in international tennis competition. A story by Greg Bishop in the *New York Times* ("Colombians Build a Tennis Future," August

30, 2010) noted the achievements of two young Colombian tennis players, Alejandro Falla and Santiago Giraldo. Falla has been ranked forty-eighth in singles in the world; Giraldo achieved a world ranking of twenty-eighth.

During the 2016 summer Olympics at Rio de Janeiro, Colombians won eight medals: three gold, two silver, and three bronze. At Rio, Óscar Figueroa was the first Colombian male to win a gold medal; he won in weightlifting. The first gold medal awarded to a woman occurred at the 2000 Sydney games; María Isabel Urrutia won for weightlifting. During the 2020 summer Olympics (held in Tokyo in August 2021) Colombians took home five medals including a silver for Mariana Pajón who won her medal in Women's BMX Racing. (Inline) Roller speed skating—which is not an Olympic event—is a sport where Colombians, traditionally, have excelled. At the World Championship competition in September 2016, held in Nanjing, China, Colombia took twenty gold medals (of forty-five total), followed by France with six gold medals and Italy with five. At the 2021 Inline Speed Skating World Championships, held at Ibagué, (Colombia), Colombia captured thirty-one medals, well ahead of their closest rivals, France, which took home a total of thirteen medals.

Colombia diverges from Latin America in its enthusiastic support of cycling. Colombian racers have regularly turned in competitive finishes at the leading world venues for cycling, including the Tour de France: in 1988, Fabio Parra took third place in the tour, and Colombian Luis "Lucho" Herrera had great success on the international cycling circuit, including a win in 1987 at the Vuelta de España, the Tour of Spain. Nairo A. Quintana Rojos (aka "Naironman") excelled on the international cycling circuit. The twenty-six-year-old from Tunja, Boyacá, won the "Giro de Italia" in 2014 and the Vuelta de España (2016), and he placed third overall in the 2016 Tour de France. Lightning struck in 2019 when the young Colombian from Bogotà, Egan Bernal won the Tour de France. He is the first Latin American to win the most prestigious international cycling competition. Colombia's unique geography, with many mountains and valleys connected by winding, steep roads, allows for amateur and semiprofessional cyclists to train in and around the capital city. The Colombian Federation of Coffee Growers sponsored a team, Café de Colombia, featuring a team jersey that depicts the icon of the Colombian coffee federation's advertising campaign, Juan Valdez, and his trusted donkey, Conchita. Nairo Quintana raced with "Movistar Team," a Spanish cycling team subsidized by Movistar, a Spanish telephone/telecommunications company. Since 2020, he has raced with Arkéa-Samsic, a French team. Bernal currently races with the British UCI WorldTeam Ineos Grenadiers.

Twelve or thirteen Colombians remain active in Major League Baseball competition during the 2022 season. All of the players hail from the Atlantic

coast, including star pitcher José Quintana, who currently plays for the New York Mets. Mr. Quintana is from the town of Arjona, near the city of Cartagena. Baseball, from the earliest days of the twentieth century, has had a sort of pan-Caribbean appeal, following the path of the U.S. Marines and military forces in the late nineteenth century and leading into Teddy Roosevelt's "big stick" Caribbean policy of the early twentieth century. Baseball is not a Colombian "national" sport to the degree that soccer and cycling are. But many Colombians follow the U.S. pastime, paying particularly close attention to the teams that employ the *costeños*—the young men from the Colombian coast who represent Colombia in the U.S. major leagues.

A sport and cultural event that is practiced with great passion in the eastern plains of Colombia, particularly in and around the city of Villavicencio, is called *coleo*—a sort of Colombian-Venezuelan rodeo. *Coleo* is a gathering, a celebration of the culture and tradition of the eastern plains, and a demonstration of the work, art, and struggle of the *llaneros*, the people who live on the plains. *Coleo* comes from the Spanish verb *colear*, which in the infinitive translates as "to wag one's tail." The eastern plains of Colombia are a region strongly characterized by cowboy culture, and cattle raising predominates socially and economically there. The *coleo* is a competition in which two cowboys on horseback are tasked with taking down a young bull by getting behind the beast and pulling on its tail until it loses its balance and falls over. The fall is important: the more dramatic and sensational, the more points earned. The Colombian rodeo differs from the Texas rodeo in that the South American bull is approached from behind; rodeos in the United States and Canada focus on riding and roping the horns. Unlike the Spanish bullfight, neither the Colombian *coleo* nor the U.S. rodeo engages in a matador-bull duel to the death, though many animals are injured in *coleos* and sent off to the slaughterhouse. Recorded or live *joropo* music is played during the *coleo*, and beer is relatively inexpensive and plentiful at the celebration. Since 1997, Villavicencio has hosted the annual Coleo World Cup; a recent competition, the XXI Encuentro Mundial de Coleo, was held in October 2022 and was won by the Colombian Jesús Yonency Cuevas. Panamanians, Brazilians, Argentines, and Venezuelans are Latin American neighbors who practice *coleo*, which can be classified as sport, social activity, or cultural unifier of the people of the Latin American plains.

Women have begun to receive recognition in the Colombian sporting scene; for example, of the eight medals awarded at the 2016 Rio games, half were won by Colombian women, including Caterine Ibargüen, who won gold in the triple jump, and Mariana Pajón; she took gold in BMX cycling and silver (as mentioned above) in the most recent Tokyo games. In Cuba, women have excelled in individual and team competitions, and the Peruvian

and Brazilian women's volleyball teams and the U.S. women's soccer and basketball teams have excelled in international competitions. But Colombian sports heroes have mostly been men, and that is unlikely to change given the centrality of soccer (men's soccer) in the Colombian imagination, celebrated and reinforced by the Colombian and international media conglomerates, and Colombian society at large.

BEAUTY PAGEANTS

One arena of society where women do, in fact, have power—a strange, sometimes surreal type of power—is through the "Reinado de Belleza," the Colombian beauty competitions. Each November in Cartagena, the national beauty pageant takes place. As in the United States, the Colombian pageant is the final competition in a yearlong nomination process, in which a representative from each Colombian department (state) participates. The competition attracts a wide national television audience, and beauty pageant winners at the state and certainly national level are public figures in Colombia; they are expected to participate in charity and social events and uphold admirable standards to be imitated by younger Colombian girls. Colombian intellectuals—including the writers Laura Restrepo and Gabriel García Márquez—have ridiculed the event for its one-dimensional focus on Colombian physical feminine beauty. But like any media event, in Colombia or elsewhere, corporate sponsorship allows for a lavish show and a weeklong lead-in to the actual event. Critics have contended that the show is elitist and unrepresentative of Colombia at large and that the display of expensive gowns, jewelry, and luxury accessible to an infinitesimally small percentage of Colombians is irresponsible. Others offer a more nuanced view of the competition, stressing the theatrical dimension of the competition and the entertainment provided by the pageant. Long-time president of the national pageant, Raimundo Angulo, commented that the Miss Colombia pageant could, one day, turn a poor, steamy coastal city into "the Monte Carlo of the Caribbean," though that remains to be seen.[2] American journalist Simon Romero's fascinating depiction of the "dual" beauty pageants in Cartagena shows the importance of the beauty pageant to the nation's history and consciousness. While the "official" pageant proceeds with the international jet set in attendance, a concurrent celebration of the city's independence from Spain (in 1811) takes place "during a tumultuous street festival" in the poorer neighborhoods of Cartagena.[3] This parallel competition and celebration more accurately reflects the socioeconomic reality of an extremely poor city that is more black than white and where the vast majority of women have never slipped into a haute

couture evening gown. Cartagena is a city accustomed to struggle: during the independence war with Spain, Cartagena suffered a terrible siege in 1815 that lasted months and resulted in the deaths of about 6,500 residents, or about one-third of the total population of the city.

The Miss Colombia beauty pageant made it into U.S. news in May 2001, when late-night comedian and television host David Letterman made a crude joke on his show, which indirectly compared Miss Colombia to a *mula*, or a person who is hired (or coerced) to ingest and transport across national boundaries pellet-shaped latex capsules filled with illegal narcotics. Letterman apologized, but only after Andrea Noceti, Miss Colombia of that year, threatened to sue him. Both parties quickly entered into a truce, formalized when Noceti agreed to appear in New York City on *Late Show with David Letterman*. Mr. Letterman's band greeted Miss Colombia's onstage entrance with a rousing rendition of the Colombian national anthem.

RETAKING THE COLOMBIAN URBAN CENTERS

During the late 1970s and 1980s, the industrial city of Medellín became known as one of the most violent, terrifying places on the planet, for non-Colombians and Colombians alike. The city had physically sprawled outside of the geographically imposed boundaries (it sits at about 1,470 meters in a central mountain valley), and poor people moved up the sides of the mountains, settling there while fighting for basic infrastructure including sewerage, clean water, electricity, and elementary schools for their children. The elite pushed back to El Poblado, an enclave neighborhood in the south, as the poor took most of the north and the surrounding east-west hills.

The drug cartel violence of the 1970s through the 1990s created great social tensions in Medellín, and as the violence escalated in 1979, city leaders began planning for an above-ground urban rail network, metro system. In 1995, the Metro of Medellín opened and helped unify a fractured city and society. The metro immediately became a source of civic and national pride, as Colombians were able to demonstrate to the rest of the world that they could plan, engineer, and execute large-scale infrastructure projects that could help solve modern urban problems while bringing a city and a people together. The metro became the envy of the nation, but the plans to extend the metro into the vast *comunas* (poor neighborhoods) via a "gondola lift" system seemed impossible technologically and highly improbable, given the vast social tensions present in those areas. However, in 2004, "Metro Cable Linéa K" opened, bringing people up into the Santo Domingo neighborhood, a vast, sprawling "vertical territory" with hundreds of thousands of residents.

"Linéa J" opened in 2008 to serve people living on the eastern slope of the mountain, and the metro system has helped solve some of the city's problems of transit while bringing a modicum of unification to the city of two and a half million. With greater physical access to the poor neighborhoods of Medellín, city leaders and urban planners have been building parks, schools, libraries, and other civic projects in these once neglected, marginalized, and feared neighborhoods. Perhaps the most impressive project to date is the Parque/Biblioteca España, a monumental library and park built high up in the Santo Domingo neighborhood. The project was financed by the Spanish government. Sadly, due to significant structural deficiencies, the library was closed in 2015, but work began in early 2022 to rebuild the entire project at a cost of some seven million dollars—financed, this time, by the city of Medellín. Above this Park, visitors can continue on Linéa K Cable Metro to the Parque Arví, an expansive nature park outside the city limits that's become a popular destination for tourists and those hoping to escape the urban bustle of the nation's second largest city. The recently built Parques del Rio along the Medellín River have added a new urban life to the city that's now known for world class art museums, efficient public transportation and inviting, unifying public spaces and parks.

Bogotá, by the mid-1970s, emerged as one of the largest population centers in Latin America and perhaps the fifth largest in the region, behind Mexico City, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Lima. The city's problems grew increasingly complex with growing insecurity, a lack of adequate housing, and low investment in public transportation. The chilly, rainy, dark, and perpetual late-fall feel of Bogotá contrasted sharply with Medellín's "eternal spring" optimism, pleasant climate, and civic pride—particularly after the inauguration of the metro. With a population of roughly eight million, Bogotá's fortunes changed in positive terms as a result of the dynamic, creative leadership of mathematician, philosopher, and former rector of the National University, Antanas Mockus Sivickas, who ascended to the second-most-important elected post in the nation: mayor of Bogotá. Mockus used theatrical tactics to help residents of Bogotá save water (he starred in a television commercial, filmed while he showered), obey traffic laws (mimes were hired to publicly embarrass jaywalkers), and pay taxes. Next, the technocratic, U.S.-educated mayor, Enrique Peñalosa, and the more socially oriented mayor, Luis Eduardo "Lucho" Garzón, continued modernizing Bogotá via investment in parks and public libraries. They also prioritized the goal of meeting basic infrastructural coverage (electricity and water) for all homes; homicide rates fell, and plans were developed for construction of an urban transportation system that would operate on the same principles as a metro, without prohibitively expensive and disruptive tunneling. Visionary leadership, a commitment

to big infrastructure projects, and prudent fiscal management resulted in the inauguration in December 2000 of the TransMilenio transportation system—modeled after a similar system in Curitiba, Brazil. Despite some setbacks, including major engineering miscalculations in construction of the dedicated bus lane, new lines are currently being added to bring coverage to the north-south-west corridors of Bogotá, and millions of Bogotanos use the system, which extends along twelve lines over 114 kilometers. Still, talk of a "metro," similar to the Medellín metro, dominates transportation strategies and planning for the future. The mayor of Bogotá, Enrique Peñalosa (he served as mayor from 1998–2000 and was elected mayor in 2015; he took possession of the mayor's office on January 1, 2016) presented a plan for an above-ground metro. In October 2019, APCA Transmimetro Consortium (a Chinese–Canadian Consortium) won the contract for the 4.7-billion-dollar project. The first line is scheduled to open in 2028 (after delays imposed by the pandemic), and a second line has recently been approved.

In Bogotá, three new public libraries opened during the first decade of the twenty-first century: the Virgilio Barco near the Parque Simón Bolívar, el Parque Biblioteca Tunal in the south of the city, and El Tintal in the remote west. These libraries, designed to provide access to computers, books, and study space for all residents of the city, are intended to help shrink the achievement gap between the wealthy, who have in-home libraries and access to excellent private libraries and study spaces at the city's many private schools and universities, and the majority of the citizens of Bogotá, who cannot afford private education. The mainstay of the public library system, the Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango (BLAA), in the middle of the colonial section of the city, remains a dynamic cultural center. The BLAA is visited by scholars, high school and university students, and children from the surrounding neighborhood and operates in concert with a public system that includes more than one hundred libraries.

Unifying elements in Colombia's capital city also include many urban parks, including the Parque Central Simón Bolívar and the Parque Metropolitano Tercer Milenio, or the "Third Millennium Metropolitan Park," which opened in 2002. Simón Bolívar Park can be compared to New York's Central Park, though the Bogotá park is larger. It is a place people from all social classes enjoy; there are miles of walking and jogging paths, a man-made lake adorns the center, and the park is carefully monitored by uniformed security guards. The Third Millennium Park was planned in the late 1990s, and the first section of the park opened in 2002; this park was built in a dismal central-city neighborhood, "El Cartucho,"[4] known for criminal activity, to which Bogotanos from the north sector of the city (the more affluent, in general) would never venture. But after taking down more than

six hundred structures, the city built a forty-one-acre urban park designed to revitalize downtown Bogotá, reduce crime in the city, and provide a safe space of transit and recreation for all city residents. Unfortunately, there are few advocates for the homeless in Bogotá, and it is difficult to calculate where the people who lived in this neighborhood went, but most agree that they were pushed farther into the west and south of the city, where the majority of the population lives in poverty ranging in condition from dignified to destitute. One such southern urban locality, "Ciudad Bolívar," has been historically marginalized. This segment of Bogotá suffers from a stew of social maladies: poverty, high levels of adolescent pregnancy, environmental degradation, and high crime rates. However, construction began, in 2016, on a gondola transportation network (similar to the Medellín system) to Ciudad Bolívar. The "TransMiCable" was completed ahead of schedule in 2018 and offers a 3.4-kilometer path from the city up to "Mirador del Paraíso" in the Ciudad Bolívar locality, connecting a neglected urban neighborhood to the city core. Folks, now, can transport—in about fourteen minutes' time—from their hillside homes to a central urban bus station called "Portal Tunal."

Another key activity that brings together all classes harmoniously in Colombia is the weekly *ciclovía*, or literally "bike lane," that runs Sundays from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. in Bogotá and has recently been introduced in other Colombian cities. The *ciclovía*, started in 1976, is a highly organized Sunday (and Monday holiday) takeover of the principal roads by bicyclists, joggers, walkers, and skateboarders. It is estimated that two million people participate weekly in Bogotá. The *ciclovía* turns the city into a sort of open park; along the route people set up stalls, selling soft drinks, juices, and snacks. Entrepreneurial Colombians bring their tools to the street and set up "repair stands" for citizens who run into minor mechanical mishaps. In the early days, *ciclovía* extended only along the principal north-south thoroughfare known as the "Séptima" (Seventh Avenue), but now the routes extend along most of the major city thoroughfares. People of all ages, social classes, and professions participate in the weekly *ciclovía*, which has become a model program for Colombia and Latin America.

In addition to the *ciclovía*, Colombians have led Latin America by building an urban bike network. As of 2022, approximately 564 kilometers of dedicated bicycle lanes form part of the urban landscape, allowing Bogotá to claim the most extensive and comprehensive bike network of any city in the Americas. Bike ownership has quintupled in Bogotá over the years, though the relationship between automobiles, buses, trucks, and bicycles is evolving, subject to daily negotiation. Lanes continue to be constructed as of late 2022.

RADIO, TV, AND SOAP OPERAS

Technological change helped break down the walls of isolation perceived by many Colombians, isolation imposed by the accidents of geography. The intense regional identifications—a hallmark of Colombian society—began a national dialogue of sorts with the advent of three important technological developments: the airplane, the radio, and finally, in 1954, television, which was introduced to Colombia by General Rojas Pinilla. In 1919, in the Caribbean port city of Barranquilla, SCADTA (Sociedad Colombo-Alemán de Transportes Aeréos), generally credited as the first commercial airline in the Americas, was founded by German immigrants living in and around Barranquilla and was later organized as Avianca Airlines, which still exists today as Colombia's national airline. Avianca, known in business circles as "Avianca Group"—the name of the Latin American multinational holding company—declared bankruptcy in 2020 due to effects from the global pandemic. The Company emerged from bankruptcy with a restructuring plan about a year later. Air transportation, in the early twentieth century, contributed to the process of modernization in Colombia and helped Colombians feel more connected to other regions of their own nation and the world, though in the earliest days of aviation only the wealthiest Colombians could afford to travel by airplane.

Ten years after the advent of air transportation, the radio arrived in Colombia, also in the city of Barranquilla. Radio networks in Colombia—including the two powerful networks RCN and Caracol—have helped to bring unity to a nation divided by mountains and valleys. The growth of radio occurred with the ascent of the Liberal Party in 1930. Liberal leaders allowed for a mixed public-private financing arrangement that brought outside funding to this new technology, and radio investment grew, particularly after 1931. Colombian citizens learned the details of the nation's short war with Peru in 1932 thanks to radio broadcasts, and advertisers soon learned the power of this new medium to sell products to Colombian citizens. Colombian radio was unique in the Americas thanks to the creation of Radio Sutatenza in 1947; it was an educational radio network founded by Father José Joaquín Salcedo in the rural community of Sutatenza, Boyacá, north of the Colombian capital. Father Salcedo hoped to bring literacy and education to *campesinos* living in rural Colombia, in places where teachers were absent, schoolhouses had never been constructed, and the future for the people was, at best, static. Eventually the station moved to Bogotá, and it became a powerful tool of popular education, receiving funding from outside benefactors including the World Bank, General Electric, and the Inter-American Development Bank. The station's broadcast center was visited and blessed by the pope in 1968.

Controversy erupted in the 1960s when a young, political, rebellious priest, Father Camilo Torres Restrepo, accused the station, its founders, and backers of harming the people it purported to help via the radio's excessive anti-Communist teachings. Father Torres viewed the radio station as a tool of the most reactionary elements of society, in concert with their outside funders. Despite his concerns and those of others on the political left, the radio station continued to broadcast until the early 1990s, when it was absorbed by the Caracol radio network.

Television came to Bogotá with great fanfare in June 1954. Television—like the introduction of radio some twenty-five years earlier—changed the social dynamic of the Colombian household. According to Colombian journalist and social critic Oscar Collazos, "Colombian families placed the television first in the living room, then the bedroom—it offered the possibility of family unity without conversation, families could eat together without sitting at the table and become 'informed' without reading newspapers."[5] The new technology forced social change within the household but also introduced images of other places to those Colombians who had never traveled outside of their city or region. Advertisers could use the new technology to sell products and expand markets, politicians seemed more tangible, and politics became more immediate and important. The changes initiated by television in Colombia were dramatic, though initially, it is estimated that only 1,500 televisions were available to see the first transmission on June 13, 1954, broadcast from the basement of the National Library.[6] By 1960, approximately 80 percent of the Colombian territory was receiving television transmissions,[7] and while this new technology did not solve social problems or reduce poverty, it did help forge and unify the modern Colombian nation, a unification project that seemed impossible at the beginning of the twentieth century. By 2008, it was estimated that about 85 percent of Colombian households had televisions. Thus, prominent Colombian historian and journalist Eduardo Lemaitre, who died in 1994, was not exaggerating when he wrote that "three things have given this country of countries a nation with common principles, and have given it a compact to exist as a singular unit: the Constitution of 1886, the Magdalena River, and the television."[8]

Television in Colombia has been derided for its supposed superficiality, with excessive focus on feminine beauty, style rather than substance, and a proclivity for showing gory violence on the evening news. But the Colombian *telenovela* developed a following in Colombia and Latin America that is now legendary. Soap operas from Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and Venezuela are seen throughout Latin America and in U.S. markets with significant Latin American populations—Miami, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and south Texas, for example. The Colombian soap opera is known for outstanding

production quality and excellent acting and writing, and two soap operas are worthy of mention. When *Café con aroma de mujer* (*Coffee with the Scent of a Woman*) was produced in 1994, it mesmerized the Colombian nation. The soap opera appeared at a time when Colombians were searching for an escape from the daily routine—a routine that had turned deadly and dreary. *Café* distracted people from the recent past and helped them to focus on something else. The story line seemed, at first glance, to dwell on cliché: beautiful female plantation worker falls in love with wealthy businessman. The series, however, dealt with important social issues pertinent to Colombia and Latin America at that time. Those issues included human trafficking, prostitution, and women's ability to ascend in a male-dominated universe, together with the enduring power of love. The series was filmed on location in the Colombian "coffee zone" and helped foster a boom in tourism to the lush, mountainous coffee cities, principally Pereira, Manizales, and Armenia.

A few years later, in 1999, *Yo soy Betty la fea* captivated the nation. The story of "Ugly Betty"—the brainy secretary who works behind the scenes to help save the fashion company that employs her and becomes romantically involved with the boss—was so popular in Colombia that it was recast into a successful television series in the United States, playing in prime time for four seasons starting in 2006 as *Ugly Betty*. Colombians were impressed that a creative product designed for the Colombian nation could compete on the world stage, particularly in the powerful and extremely competitive U.S. prime-time network television market.

GASTRONOMY, COLOMBIAN STYLE

Colombian cuisine is rarely mentioned as one of the great cuisines of the world in the way that French, Chinese, Italian, or Mexican cuisines are regarded by food experts and critics. Colombian cuisine varies from region to region and between socioeconomic class. The traditional Colombian diet is meat based, and no meal is considered "proper" unless it contains some type of meat (beef, pork, chicken, or fish) as the main component. Potato, rice, and corn are staples in Colombia, together with yucca, plantain, and every type of tropical fruit imaginable. The Colombian diet is high in carbohydrates: a typical working-class lunch might consist of a piece of beef accompanied by white rice, potatoes, and pasta.

At its core, Colombian cuisine is a combination of indigenous and Spanish traditions with strong Afro-Caribbean influence. Defining Colombian cuisine through the lens of the contemporary "locavore" [locally sourced] movement can be difficult as Colombian food has traditionally been defined

by utilitarianism. In the high plateau Andean region, marked by a cool climate and high altitudes, food tends to be starch-based with hearty meats to sustain long hours and gruelling agricultural work—think soups, grilled meat and fruits. However, as curious diners and foreign tourists increase demand, opportunities for innovation have grown. This is perhaps best embodied by Chef Leonor Espinosa, who was awarded the title of Best Female Chef in Latin America by "World's 50 Best" in 2017. Her restaurant, Leo in Bogotá, is the highest rated in Colombia at number forty-eight in the world (2022).

While Colombia does not have a "national" dish, the *ajiaco* probably comes close. It is a potato stew made from three distinct varieties of locally grown potatoes, seasoning, rice, and pulled pieces of tender chicken. It is served with capers, sour cream, and avocado. *Ajiaco* is the main meal on Sundays, when families are gathered together for lunch; carbohydrate and calorie rich, it is designed to feed large numbers of people. In Medellín, the focus is on pork and beans: the *bandeja paisa* is the regional dish from Antioquia and, like *ajiaco*, it is meant to feed everyone in the extensive Medellín household. The *bandeja* (or "tray") consists of ground beef, sausages, rice, fried plantains, a flat corn cake called *arepa*, beans, avocado, and a fried egg on top. The plate is lightly seasoned with salt. Colombians, in general, are averse to heavy spices and, unlike their neighbors to the south (Peruvians) or to the north (Mexicans), tend to prefer bland food. The coastal regions of Colombia have their own cuisine based on the availability of fresh fish. Fish is served with white rice, fried plantains, or—a delicacy of the coastal region—*arroz con coco* (rice made with fresh coconut).

UNIVERSITY LIFE IN COLOMBIA

The official education numbers for Colombia appear promising but can be deceptive. For example, from 2005 to 2007, the percentage of children from five to sixteen years of age who were enrolled in school jumped from 88 to 90 percent. *Attendance* is a relatively ambiguous term and does not account for vast differences in quality of education services available. Extremely rigorous, internally accredited private schools can be found in all of the major cities in Colombia; these are the schools supported by the wealthy elite. Poorer schools, in rural areas, are only marginally staffed, and basic infrastructure is limited. The overall literacy rate for Colombia is about 95.6 percent as reported by World Bank data in 2020, and more Colombians are attending university today than ever before. From 2002 to 2007, according to reliable statistics from DANE (the National Administrative Statistics Department of Colombia), the percentage of students enrolled in either public or private

universities grew by 7.4 percent, to 31.8 percent. By 2015, the percentage grew to 48.9 percent of all university-age students in the nation. The census of 2018 projected that, by 2021, 53.9 percent of Colombia's students are covered by university education which indicated significant growth over the past two decades. Public universities, including the nation's flagship Universidad Nacional de Colombia at Bogotá, offer a university education modeled after European and U.S. programs. Many of Colombia's leading intellectuals, attorneys, social scientists, artists, scientists, and engineers graduated from this university, informally referred to as the "Nacho." Admission is granted based on the results of a comprehensive, selective admissions exam. Tuition—once free—is now paid on a sliding scale according to the family's income and ability to pay. Strikes, protests, and political demonstrations are legendary at the National University, but the university continues to train professionals, many of whom become leaders in their respective fields. Similarly, the University of Antioquia in Medellín has trained the technical elite who have worked to secure the city's reputation as a leading manufacturing center.

Private universities have been growing in number and prestige during the past two decades, with many Colombians having earned advanced master's and PhD degrees in the United States and Europe; these professionals, returning to work in Colombia, have organized important master's and PhD programs at universities such as Los Andes in Bogotá, the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, the National University, the Universidad Industrial de Santander (Bucaramanga), and the Universidad del Norte in Barranquilla, among others. In Bogotá there has been a proliferation of high-quality master's programs in history, literature, economics, cultural studies, and geography, to name but a few. The University of Los Andes recently opened a medical school, and the Jesuit-run Universidad Javeriana's tradition of training lawyers, philosophers, and theologians dates back to colonial times. Of course, private schools charge tuition that only the salaried class can afford to pay, but students at excellent private universities in Colombia represent a wide range of the socioeconomic strata. However, citizens from the lower socioeconomic class do find a place in the public universities, though the *cupo* (slots) are limited and demand for space always exceeds capacity.

While this chapter could never be fully representative of daily life in Colombia, we have tried to demonstrate the complexity of contemporary Colombian society and the many opportunities that Colombians have to express common cultural traits. A nation divided by geography, Colombia has had difficulty unifying around a national cultural ethos. The Roman Catholic Church provided unity by introducing and reinforcing the Catholic calendar's holy days of obligations and feasts. Modern technology arrived

and brought some unifying elements of daily life, mainly in the form of radio and television, and the related transmission of national sporting events and beauty pageants. A nation as divided as Colombia, by geography, social and economic class, political power, education, and *apellido* (family name) can never come together completely and earnestly, but innovative and intelligent Colombians have worked hard to create infrastructure, parks, programs, transportation systems, and university curricula that help Colombians focus on what unites them as a people and a nation rather than what has historically divided society.

NOTES

1. Eduardo Galeano, *El fútbol a sol y sombra* (Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1995), 230–31.
2. See Simon Romero, "Dueling Beauty Pageants Put Income Gap on View," *New York Times*, November 30, 2010.
3. Ibid.
4. "El Cartucho" was the informal name given to this sector of downtown Bogotá, abandoned by the middle class in the 1950s and taken over by the homeless, many of whom made their living from a variety of illegal activities; they did provide an informal but efficient recycling program for the city and earned money by selling scrap metal, paper, and other recyclables—hence the name *cartucho*, which roughly translates to "used, scrap cardboard boxing material."
5. Oscar Collazos, "Aparece la Televisión," www.colombialikn.com. Accessed February 8, 2011.
6. Raymond Leslie Williams and Kevin G. Guerrieri, *Culture and Customs of Colombia* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 45.
7. Ibid., 46.
8. "Asi arrancó la odisea," *Semana*, June 6, 2004.

Chapter Eleven

Colombia and the World

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Colombia's relationship with its Latin American neighbors, Europe, and the United States evolved in a substantial and systematic manner. This chapter studies two centuries of Colombian external relations, focusing on the Andean nation's relationship with its territorial neighbors, the complexity of its European alliances, and the growing interest of the United States, particularly after the 1823 Monroe Doctrine. The chapter concludes with recent collaborations and tensions between the United States and Colombia—collaboration in the form of funding through "Plan Colombia," which has directed about eleven billion dollars in mostly military aid to Colombia since 2000. Also, we study the recent relations with two Andean neighbors, Ecuador and Venezuela. The legacy of Peruvian-Colombian relations is explored, with a focus on the relative peace and collaboration between those two nations after an unfortunate war in 1932. Brazil and Colombia share a large Amazonian border, and transshipment of illegal narcotics has been a recent source of stress between the two nations. Those stressors have been magnified by Brazil's emergence as a regional and world power with a concurrent determination to defend its borders against illegal smuggling.

Of course, Colombia's modern external relations must begin with a focus on the colonizing European power, Spain. But the story of independence has been carefully outlined in earlier chapters of this book, and once the break from Spain was complete, the task of organizing the Colombian nation ran parallel to reorganizing its European alliances and relations. The new Colombian nation looked—generally—to Great Britain for economic advice, to France for cultural and philosophical principles, and to the United States, begrudgingly, for technical support.

Latin America's relationship with the young neighbor to the north, the United States, began as a series of misunderstandings perpetuated by prejudicial, jaundiced commentaries. As early as 1811, Thomas Jefferson worried about the Latin American independence movement, suggesting Latin Americans were neither ready for nor capable of true independence. "I fear," wrote the statesman regarding the Latin American independence movements, "the degrading ignorance into which their priests and kings have sunk them, has disqualified them from the maintenance or even knowledge of their rights and that much blood may be shed for little improvement in their condition."[1] The great Liberator of the northwest segment of South America, Simón Bolívar, had an equally myopic but certainly more nuanced view of the neighbor to the north. David Bushnell, in a brief but fascinating study published in 1986, reported on Bolívar's "ambivalence" toward the United States, best illustrated by the Liberator's declaration, written in a letter in 1829, one year before his death. He asserted, "I think it would be better for South America to adopt the Koran rather than the United States' form of government, although the latter is the best on earth."[2] Bolívar is best known, perhaps, for his unambiguous, provocative, and somewhat prophetic comment in another letter dated 1829. He warned, "The United States . . . seems destined by Providence to plague America with torments in the name of freedom."[3] Bushnell suggests that the monarchist-leaning Liberator was lamenting the United States' push for republican governments in Latin America against the more monarchist aims of Great Britain, a society that would have a much greater influence in Latin America, including Colombia, during most of the nineteenth century.

THE EARLY DAYS

In 1823, the United States expressed its interest in influencing Latin American politics and trade in the famous Monroe Doctrine, which was widely misinterpreted as a doctrine of intervention. President James Monroe's doctrine was a warning against future European attempts at recolonization in Latin America, as the wars for independence entered the final phase. Great Britain was the dominant Western power in 1823, and the British presence in Latin America, including Colombia, was deep. For example, Simón Bolívar benefited from British soldiers of fortune at the decisive Battle of Boyacá, and the British supplied, "on credit, substantial amounts of military equipment to the patriot forces."[4] Colombian independence allowed an opening up of critical Caribbean ports, and British imports flooded Cartagena and Santa Marta. With the British directing New Granada's foreign trade in the earliest days of the republic, Colombia's debt mounted, and by the middle of the 1820s,

immediately after independence, the new nation found that it could not afford the interest payment on exorbitant loans issued by British banks.

New Granada was directly involved in an intense rivalry in the Caribbean for markets and influence waged between the United States and Great Britain. France, Britain, and the United States were all interested in a trans-isthmian (across what is today Panama) route as a way of extending their trade networks. The British made inroads on the Caribbean coast of Central America (the "Mosquito Coast" of Nicaragua and British Honduras, later renamed Belize), and French colonialism in the Caribbean endured for much of the century. French interest in the Caribbean grew particularly after the 1848 revolution in France that witnessed the election of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte—who three years after the election annulled the results and ushered in the Second French Empire. This empire was characterized by an aggressive foreign policy with repercussions for Latin America, especially in Mexico and the Caribbean. The Second French Empire lasted until 1871.

Also in 1848, the United States ratified the Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty, which combined commercial interests (U.S. products in New Granada were treated, with regard to tariff, equally) and the isthmus question. The United States agreed to support the "perfect neutrality" of the Isthmus of Panama provided that U.S. citizens could freely pass through the isthmus as they pleased.

By 1855, the privately owned and operated (U.S.) Panama Railroad opened, linking the Caribbean port city of Colón to the capital city of the Province of Panama, Panama City on the Pacific. The discovery of gold in California in 1849 provoked a rush of U.S. East Coast–based speculators to the far west, and the safest, most comfortable route, particularly with the opening of the railroad, was via the Isthmus of Panama. Stephen J. Randall has reported on the profitability of the railroad and noted how it "was the single most significant revenue source for the Colombian treasury from the turbulent 1850s until the contract was revised in 1867."[5]The presence of a U.S. railroad company in Panama created a trio of tensions between Panamanians, North Americans, and Bogotanos; the parties argued over control of tax revenues, land rights/access, and freight rates, among other concerns. Tensions boiled over on several occasions, but the most often reported incident is known as the "watermelon riot" of April 15, 1856. This violent episode, which began ostensibly over lack of payment by a U.S. citizen for a slice of watermelon, left about two dozen dead. Unfortunately, as demonstrated by the riot, tension and mistrust defined the relationship between Bogotá and Washington, though U.S. investment in Colombia grew, especially with the conclusion of the U.S. Civil War in 1865. The U.S. investment pattern favored transportation—including steam transportation and railroad projects in the Colombian

interior—but most U.S. investment during this time was focused on Panama. Fourteen million dollars is the estimated U.S. investment in Colombia by 1881, and, according to Randall "the bulk [of this investment] was represented by the Panamá Railroad."[6]

THE CANAL PROJECT

Discussion of a trans-isthmian canal became a priority in the 1860s, especially with the successful construction of Suez in Egypt, a project developed by French engineer and entrepreneur Ferdinand de Lesseps. The Suez opened in 1869 after approximately ten years' work. In Colombia, however, the United States failed to take action on an 1870 treaty which would have allowed for construction of a canal through Panama. During this time, the United States considered a possible route through Nicaragua and a Mexican route through Tehuantepec that involved, essentially, hoisting ships out of the Caribbean Sea onto a platform that would be pulled over land on parallel trains running from the Caribbean to the Pacific. This project was never undertaken.

After extensive vacillation on the part of the United States, the French attempted to build a canal in Panama. Ferdinand de Lesseps, whose success with Suez made him somewhat of an international celebrity, organized and financed a canal project, and construction began in 1881. But the Lesseps Panama project was never supported by the United States, which opposed an expansion of the French presence in the Caribbean. The engineering company went bankrupt by 1889, and it is estimated that forty thousand workers, mostly from Jamaica and other Caribbean locales, died of yellow fever and malaria while working in the Caribbean heat for a French company that was mismanaged and crippled by massive fraud, graft, and corruption. Though approximately 40 percent of the canal route had been dug during a seven-year period, the Lesseps project was a monumental failure and, in theory, a cautionary tale for European economic expansion abroad.

With the French collapse in the Caribbean, the United States' determination to build a canal grew dramatically, and the competition between the European powers and the young American upstart to succeed in a trans-isthmian canal project can be compared to the space race of the 1950s and 1960s between the Soviet Union and the United States. Several factors influenced the United States' push for a canal, not least of which was the ascension to the presidency in September 1901 of Theodore Roosevelt. Having served as secretary of the navy, he advocated for a "two ocean" navy and believed that U.S. military and economic power was a direct function of a strong naval force. The United States' short war in 1898 with Spain in the Caribbean placed

Cuba and Puerto Rico under de facto command of the United States. Guam and the Philippines in the Pacific fell under United States influence, but only after a lengthy, bloody campaign in that theater. By the turn of the twentieth century, the canal question was revisited with urgency by the United States, which increasingly viewed its economic and military health as contingent upon a direct sea route connecting the Caribbean and Pacific.

Colombia, during this same time period, underwent major systemic change, highlighted by the promulgation of a new constitution during the 1880s and the onset of a major civil war in 1899. The Colombian political "regeneration" of 1886 ushered in a sustained period of Conservative rule during the presidency of Rafael Núñez and Miguel Antonio Caro, who as vice president presided in Núñez's frequent absences and would take over for the ailing president in 1892. As noted previously, the new Conservative regime of 1886 represented a return to centralist rule and emphasized Colombia's Hispanic and Catholic traditions and culture. A year after the promulgation of the new constitution, Colombia signed a concordat that initiated a special relationship between the Holy See and Colombia and, in practical terms, meant that Colombia would officially observe the rules of the Roman Catholic Church.

But not even an agreement with the Holy See could prevent the chaos that would ensue toward the end of the nineteenth century; as the United States was concluding its war with Spain in Cuba, Colombia began a protracted civil war aptly called the "War of a Thousand Days," which lasted from late 1899 until early 1902. The war pitted Liberals against Conservatives; political intransigence combined with economic exigencies created the perfect storm, and the devastating war complicated new negotiations for the construction of a canal through Panama.

After intense lobbying in Washington, Congress reached the decision to pursue a canal through Panama rather than Nicaragua; both routes had their supporters and detractors, but the Panama route, though technologically complex, was already 40 percent completed thanks to the prior efforts of Lesseps. The Hay-Herrán Treaty was ratified in early 1903 by the United States Senate but was rejected by the Colombian Senate. Colombians worried about the loss of sovereignty over Panama, as their nation was slowly beginning the recovery from the devastating War of a Thousand Days. Colombians understood their weakened position in negotiating a major treaty with the youthful, feisty, and determined Roosevelt administration.

President Roosevelt was none too pleased with Colombia's decision to reject Hay-Herrán, and he famously referred to Colombians as "contemptible little creatures."[7] Undeterred, the U.S. president moved to support an independence movement in the Province of Panama, conspicuously positioning the U.S. destroyer *Nashville* in the waters off Colón. When Colombian troops

attempted to cross the isthmus to rescue their officers stationed at Panama City, U.S. troops prevented the Colombians from boarding the Panama Railway, which was partially owned by U.S. investors. A few days after declaring its independence from Bogotá, the United States recognized Panama as an independent nation, and a new canal treaty was written and signed by both parties. Philippe Buneau-Varilla, the French promoter of the Panama Canal project, was credentialed as the official minister in Panama, and the Panama--U.S. Canal Treaty was ratified in early 1904. Work on the project ensued immediately thereafter, and the canal was opened to traffic in 1914.

Teddy Roosevelt's intervention, his open disdain for Colombians, and his disregard for diplomatic procedure led to a freeze in U.S.-Colombian relations for more than a decade. Ironically, during the period after Colombia's "loss of Panama" up through the worldwide economic crash of 1929, Colombia remained remarkably stable, politically and economically. Colombian sensibilities had been so thoroughly offended by Teddy Roosevelt's assertiveness that the mere mention of normalizing diplomatic relations with the United States was enough to force not one but two Colombian presidents out of office. Rafael Reyes, who ruled from 1904 to 1909, began the process of normalizing relations with the United States, but he was driven from power since any negotiation with the "colossus of the north" was viewed, by his detractors, as "a betrayal of national interests and honor."[8] A few years later, President Marco Fidel Suárez, from humble origins in Antioquia, was less opaque in his dealings with the north: he concluded that Colombia must, at all cost, attach itself economically, socially, and culturally to the United States. He also pushed for passage of the treaty that would normalize relations between the two nations, the Urrutia-Thomson Treaty, which was ratified in 1922. Suárez had to step aside as president in 1921 due to allegations of corruption, but in reality, his attempts to facilitate negotiations with the United States earned him the enmity of his detractors. Pedro Nel Ospina, the Conservative technocrat from Medellín, was the acting president when normalization was achieved, and his administration benefited from the twenty-five-million-dollar indemnity paid by the United States. This capital, together with easy credit during the 1920s, helped finance infrastructure development in Colombia, especially railroad projects, roads, and investment in oil fields.

1928

While investment opportunities would facilitate diplomatic relations between Colombia and the United States during the 1920s, a major conflagration ensued involving a U.S.-owned company, United Fruit Company (UFCO),

and its Colombian subsidiary, Magdalena Fruit Company. Magdalena Fruit Company purchased bananas from local landholders, while UFCO owned most of the transportation network (the railroad) and controlled the price, export structure, and marketing of bananas in the region. Local Colombian producers and workers were at the mercy of UFCO. By the late 1920s, Colombia had emerged as the third leading exporter of bananas in the world, but with growing labor organization in the region, the strike that ensued at the coastal town of Ciénaga in 1928 seemed inevitable. Colombian soldiers moved in to put down the strike, and on December 6, 1928, the army fired live ammunition into the crowd of strikers.

The Colombian government's brutal response to the strike at Ciénaga, combined with the economic hardships imposed by the worldwide economic crash that began ten months later in October 1929 and divisions within the ruling Colombian conservative elite, resulted in a change in Colombian leadership by 1930. The presidential election that year was won by the Liberal candidate Enrique Olaya Herrera. It was the first time the Liberal Party had held the presidency in Colombia since the late nineteenth century. Despite this dramatic political shift, one enduring feature of Colombian society during this time is the relative strength of its ties to the United States—a relationship that would grow stronger during the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The events of November 1903 suggested an alternative path for U.S.-Colombian relations, but after President Suárez's "north star" policy, the final negotiation of the Urrutia-Thomson Treaty and payment of the twenty-five-million-dollar indemnity, overall diplomatic relations improved progressively and systematically. This relationship can be seen as functional and practical given that the United States has been the main market for Colombian primary exports and the Colombian external migration trend has favored the United States as a destination since, roughly, the 1960s. Compared with the United States' historical relationships with other Latin American nations during the twentieth century, the U.S.-Colombian relationship is actually a model of pragmatism and stability. For example, U.S.-Mexican relations have been fraught with tension, military intervention, and intrigue. The U.S. relationship with the Dominican Republic has likewise been complicated by multiple military interventions, the latest occurring in 1965 during the presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson. That intervention signaled the end of President Kennedy's goodwill gesture toward Latin America, the Alliance for Progress. U.S.-Cuban relations have improved since normalization of diplomatic relations ensued in 2015, but for fifty-four years, from 1961 to 2015, the U.S.-Cuba relationship could be described as antagonistic on good days, acrimonious most of the time. Though in March 2016, President Barack Obama and his family flew to Havana and visited with then president

Raúl Castro. President Trump (2017–2020) quickly restored the Cold War era clampdown favored by his Cuban-American supporters in the politically important state of Florida. U.S. direct and indirect military intervention in Nicaragua persisted during much of the twentieth century, and the current state of diplomatic relations between the United States and Venezuela, as of this writing in late 2022, is strained. The United States maintains diplomatic relations with Venezuela, but embassy operations have been "suspended" since 2019.

President Olaya went out of his way to appease U.S. business interests, especially during the early years of the Great Depression. However, his administration was not as friendly to its southern neighbors, especially Peru. The so-called Leticia Affair in 1932, which lasted for about eight months, was a serious conflict between Peru and Colombia over territory in the Amazon near the Colombian city of Leticia. As discussed in chapter 5, Peruvian civilians seized land that bordered on Leticia, in open defiance of the 1922 Salomón-Lozano Treaty that ceded Leticia to Colombia. Colombia faced a daunting challenge in moving troops to Leticia. The navy had to sail from Cartagena into the Atlantic and then up the Amazon River (through Brazilian territory) to reach Leticia, and airplanes were used to land Colombian troops in the region. The conflict was really more an "affair" than a war, and by May 1933, a cease-fire was declared and mediated by the League of Nations, and a peace treaty was signed the following year. Colombians organized energetically to defend the territory, a sparsely populated land in the jungle seen by only a handful of citizens, and they spent the equivalent of about ten million U.S. dollars in recovering the territory. Munitions were sold to Colombia by the United States, committing the Colombian government to massive (by 1930s standards) military spending, which, according to one historian, represented "a costly diversion of scarce resources and energy and drove the government toward a moratorium on its foreign debt payments."[9]

WORLD WAR II AND JORGE ELIÉCER GAITÁN

Colombia's involvement in World War II was significant and supportive of the Allies, despite the strongly pro-fascist sentiments of its emerging Conservative leader, Laureano Gómez. Colombia's Francophile ruling elite was frightened by the prospects of worldwide Axis domination, and by late 1943 the nation declared a state of belligerence against Germany in retaliation for the sinking of a Colombian naval vessel. Colombia never sent troops into battle, like Brazil, nor did Colombians fly missions abroad, as did Mexican pilots in the South Pacific. Colombia nonetheless cooperated

fully with the Allies, as directed by Washington. U.S. military missions were formally organized with Colombia, and Colombian military personnel received training in the United States. Colombia was encouraged to freeze German assets, purge German pilots from its airline (which would be renamed "Avianca" during this time), and cooperate economically with Allied powers. The United States sought to control the Colombian market for export products deemed critical to the war effort, including oil, balsa wood, quartz, and platinum, and as a result of the Colombian collaboration, the government received direct U.S. economic assistance through the Export-Import Bank.

During this time period, the most significant political leader of Colombia's twentieth century emerged. Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was born in the center of Bogotá, in a neighborhood named Las Cruces. He earned a law degree from the National University at twenty-one years of age and went on to complete a specialization in criminology in Rome. His fame grew in Colombia when in 1929 he dared to litigate against the U.S.-owned United Fruit Company, claiming that the company provoked the 1928 Ciénaga tragedy that led to scores of Colombians being killed. Gaitán's anti-imperialist discourse won him support among the urban poor and connected him to the coastal residents who saw, firsthand, the devastating effects of the UFCO enclave economic structure that kept Colombian workers entrenched in poverty while American management lived nearby in other-dimensional luxury.

In Bogotá, Gaitán became a fiery champion of the urban poor and was appointed mayor of the city in 1936; he ran for president of the republic ten years later but never received the recognition or support of the official Liberal Party. The ruling elite thought of him as a dangerous upstart and referred to him derisively as "el negro Gaitán"—which translates (politely) in English as "that dark-skinned Gaitán"—a reference to his mixed-blood, *mestizo* features. On the day he was killed by an assassin's bullet, Gaitán was working in his downtown office, preparing to compete in the 1950 presidential elections. His death touched off a wave of urban rioting throughout the country and led to growing intransigence between the two political parties. The urban poor's hope for a significant say in the running of the Colombian state seemed to evaporate when Gaitán died; many poor people assumed that the killing of the Liberal leader was orchestrated by Conservative elements within the country. Conservatives, of course, blamed the Communists. Coincidentally, on the day of his death, the Ninth International Conference of American States was meeting in Bogotá, tasked with drawing up a charter for the Organization of American States. The significant fact that Colombia was selected as the site to organize the OAS—the organization designed to provide post–World War II hemispheric solidarity and collaboration—is generally lost on the more

dramatic events that unfolded on April 9, 1948. Complicating the historical record further is Fidel Castro.

The Cuban leader (who took power in Havana eleven years later) was also in Bogotá on April 9, 1948, so conspiracy theorists have long held that "international communism" was responsible for the rioting that followed Gaitán's assassination. Castro's presence in the Colombian capital had nothing to do with pushing the communist revolution forward; he was participating in a student meeting that had been organized to coincide—as a form of protest—with the official OAS delegation meeting. Gabriel García Márquez, in his memoir *Living to Tell the Tale*, reports—ironically—that Gaitán's appointment book for April 9, 1948, was marked "Fidel Castro, 2 pm"; Gaitán was killed at 1 p.m. Fidel Castro was motivated and politicized by the events in Bogotá following Gaitán's death, but he was a young Cuban student activist, and his 1959 revolution in Cuba was clearly influenced by what he saw on a dreary April day in Bogotá. It is not at all surprising that Castro was in Bogotá, protesting the OAS organizational meeting: politicized students in Colombia and throughout Latin America were suspicious of any international organization that would be led by the United States, the undisputed Western power in the postwar world.

Gaitán's death is often blamed for ushering in the undeclared ten-year civil war in Colombia known simply as La Violencia—"the violence." But rural violence had begun much earlier, in the 1930s, when poor people were forced to compete for increasingly scarce land. An agrarian reform measure of 1936 seemed to exacerbate rather than alleviate tensions. Political intransigence at the national level, a worldwide economic downturn, and a growing social gap between those with power and wealth and those without are some factors that explain the violence. Gaitán's murder was an urban phenomenon, but people who identified with the populist leader—a man who always spoke of *el pueblo* (the people)—were fed up with government policies that ignored the struggles of the rural poor. And the growing violence, urban and rural, demonstrated both the fecklessness of the national government and the degree to which the government did not, in fact, govern over or control the entire Colombian nation.

The reality of two hundred thousand violent deaths in an undeclared civil war is certainly something no society would wish to dwell on, but that is exactly what has happened. Colombian and foreign scholars who focus on Colombia have turned research on "the violence" into a sort of cottage industry: dozens of scholars from Colombia and abroad have published dozens of works on the phenomenon of the violence in Colombia, leading some to believe that violence is the only issue that defines the nation.

A Colombian Roman Catholic priest, Father Camilo Torres Restrepo, entered the academic debate concerning Colombian "violence." In 1963, he

published his own essay, entitled "La violencia y los cambios socioculturales en las áreas rurales de Colombia." Father Torres was an internationalist who completed a master's degree in sociology at the Catholic University of Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium in the 1950s, where he was deeply influenced by the French worker priest's movement, initiated in Marseilles by Father Jacques Loew. This was an effervescent period for worldwide Catholicism, and young European priests were trying to systematically understand the horrors of World War II and the role of Church officials in a world of growing complexity, marked by violence and poverty. Father Torres was a gifted student, orator, and thinker, and he returned to Colombia prepared to take on entrenched socioeconomic and political structures. For example, Torres, in his essay, suggests that the violence had produced positive changes for the rural folk (the *campesinos*) of Colombia and had a modernizing effect since it pushed people into cities and helped them "mature" in terms of socialization and social mobility. Shortly after publishing his essay on the violence, Father Torres would become directly engaged in the violence as a guerilla fighter with the ELN. He joined the group in October 1965 and died in combat four months later.[10]

How the outside world would come to view the Colombian violence is summarized in a 1986 review article by British historian Eric J. Hobsbawm. The writer tries to make sense of the violence in Colombia, publishing in the *New York Review of Books*. Hobsbawm, like many scholars who have studied the violence, opens the article by categorizing Colombia as a place "long . . . known for an altogether exceptional proclivity to homicide."[11] However, what only a handful of authors have focused on is the remarkable set of policies developed by Colombians to stem the violence. Colombians created a political power-sharing arrangement known as the Frente Nacional, or "National Front" (described in earlier chapters), whereby political liberals and conservatives would alternate in and out of the presidency for two terms each. This would, in theory, give everyone a stake in Colombian society and would correct for some of the historic abuses of power that defined both nineteenth- and twentieth-century Colombian political development.

KOREA AND THE ALLIANCE FOR PROGRESS

The Violence alone does not define Colombia during the 1950s. Colombian armed forces, for example, participated in the United Nations–sponsored military conflict in Korea (1950–1953). Colombia was the only nation from Latin America to participate in this Cold War conflict; its participation is a direct function of the virulently anti-Communist rule of President Laureano

Gómez, an ultra-Conservative politician known to his detractors as "El Monstruo"—the Monster. Gómez, who would be removed from power in 1953 by military coup—a rarity for Colombia during the twentieth century[12]—hoped to receive military assistance from the United States as repayment for service in Korea. Colombia received millions of dollars in military aid and training for its military officers and troops and was firmly aligned with the United States.

Colombia's links to the United States grew during the 1960s. The Cuban Revolution of early 1959 pushed the United States to pay closer attention to Latin American society as a whole, rather than only the economic, political, and military elites. John F. Kennedy's election to the presidency in 1960 represented a new era of youthful, creative leadership, and he was admired in Latin America for his charisma, vitality, and Roman Catholicism. Kennedy quickly identified Colombia as a vital link to his new program for Latin America, the "Alliance for Progress," which was formally launched on August 17, 1961, in Uruguay, via the Punta del Este Charter. The alliance was designed to show that "progressive capitalism rather than communism was the most effective means of improving Latin America's material conditions of life."[13] Latin America was to receive about twenty billion U.S. dollars in mostly development aid during the 1960s, and Colombia became a sort of showcase for the alliance. The new administration in Washington was impressed by Colombia's commitment to democratic rule, the intelligence and preparation of its managing economic elite, and the overall collaborative relationship that had developed between Washington and Bogotá since the 1920s. President Kennedy and his wife, Jacqueline, visited Bogotá in mid-December 1961 and used this occasion to promote the alliance and the social development that was its main feature. Alliance funds helped build schools, hospitals, housing, and center-west segments of the Colombian capital city were planned and developed with the help of the Kennedy initiative. An area that now houses more than one million people was inaugurated "Ciudad Techo," later to be renamed "Ciudad Kennedy."

Funding to Colombia was impressive during the early days of the alliance: about twenty-five million U.S. dollars in development grants flowed to Colombia during 1961 and 1962, and another twenty-two million dollars the following year. From 1962 to 1963, the "Food for Peace" program, developed by the United States Department of Agriculture, donated about thirty-five million dollars in surplus agricultural products to Colombia, and a thirty-million-dollar "program loan" was sent to Bogotá in early 1962. Interestingly, and certainly distinct from today's reality, U.S. military spending in Colombia was far less significant than social and development spending.

Only six million dollars was sent to Colombia in military assistance in 1962; that number grew to 8.4 million dollars in 1963.[14]

Colombia was also the first Latin American nation to receive U.S. Peace Corps volunteers; sixty-one volunteers arrived in September 1961. By the late 1960s, some seven hundred Peace Corps volunteers were stationed there. The Peace Corps volunteers were charged with supporting Colombian "development," but the program was hastily organized, and the young Americans received little practical training and were unable to transform Colombia. Many of the early Peace Corps volunteers recall a personal and in some cases permanent transformative process while in Colombia, and some of the leading scholars on Colombia in the United States (Bruce Bagley, Chuck Bergquist, and Jim Henderson, to name a few) first encountered Colombia through Peace Corps service.

POPE PAUL VI AND THE CLOSE OF THE 1960S

Colombia's long-standing ties to the Holy See were reaffirmed when Pope Paul VI made his inaugural visit to the nation—the first visit to Latin America by any pontiff—on August 22, 1968. His visit was timed to coincide with the closing of the 39th International Eucharistic Congress, held in Bogotá, and the opening of the II CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference) bishops' meeting, held in Medellín in late August 1968. The Medellín meeting established the structure and guiding philosophy of a new, energetic Latin America–led "theology of liberation." Bishops, priests, and academics from all over Latin America came to Colombia to see the pope and to begin the difficult work of connecting the priorities of the Roman Catholic Church to the socioeconomic realities of the region.

While Colombians like to think of the 1960s as a decade of collaboration with the United States, increased development, and modernization of infrastructure and cities, a less alluring reality is found in the growth of armed insurgency groups during this same decade. Two groups emerged at this time, the Army of National Liberation, the ELN by its Spanish acronym, which formed in 1964, and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or the FARC, founded the same year. As outlined earlier, The FARC signed peace accords with the Colombian government in August 2016, but the ELN remains active as of this writing. That group was organized by university students and other disaffected Colombians who felt their ideas for a more just and inclusive society had been stifled by the hierarchical, elite-driven political arrangement of the National Front (an arrangement that left Colombian structures completely intact). While the ELN is internationalist, inspired by

Fidel Castro and his successful 1959 revolution, the FARC was a more local, agrarian-based movement and developed out of the *campesino* class—country folk who felt the political elites in the big cities never represented their interests or priorities.

The FARC's origins date back to the land struggles of the late 1920s and 1930s, when poor people were pushed off their land by more prosperous landlords with connections to the political and military apparatus of the state. In 1964, in an attempt to demonstrate that the state was in charge, the Colombian army bombed an insurgency stronghold in Marquetalia, and at that point, the conflict was engaged. The mostly urban, educated Colombian Communist Party sought the support of Moscow and viewed the FARC as their loyal armed representatives in the countryside, but Moscow seemed more interested in supporting leftist movements in Central America, Mexico, Cuba, and, after 1970, in Chile under Marxist president Salvador Allende. The FARC leadership sat down for four years (2012–2016) with representatives of the Colombian government of Juan Manuel Santos; they agreed to disarm and to return to civilian life. This process was discussed in detail in chapter 6.

Lawlessness extended into other aspects of Colombian society, as demonstrated by the growth in the processing and transshipment of illegal narcotics. Drug trafficking came to define Colombian society during the 1970s up through the present. Marijuana from the north coast of Colombia was grown and shipped to the United States. The so-called Santa Marta Gold became the standard of excellence among marijuana aficionados during the 1970s. The United States worked to convince the Colombian government to commit to a crop eradication program, but this barely affected U.S. consumers, who turned to domestic producers in California and other mild-climate regions in the United States. A much more profitable, easily transportable, and addictive substance became the rage among the affluent urbanites in the United States—the so-called Studio 54 set, named for the New York City nightclub where glamour, disco music, and cocaine were all openly displayed and celebrated.

Unfortunately, many non-Colombians still associate Colombia with cocaine and the notorious leader of the Medellín cartel, Pablo Escobar, who rose to prominence during the 1980s. His organization coordinated and controlled shipments of illegal narcotics out of Colombia, taking advantage of Colombia's geostrategic position (facing two oceans at the northwest corner of South America), its weak government, and its underpaid police force that was susceptible to bribes and intimidation.

CONTADORA, CENTRAL AMERICA, AND COLOMBIA'S NEIGHBORS

While engaged in a brutal, complex, free-flowing narcotics war at home, Colombia became actively engaged in promoting peace in Central America during the 1980s through the "Contadora Initiative," named for the island off the Panamanian coast where the initial meetings were held in 1983. At the suggestion of Swedish prime minister Olof Palme, Colombian Nobel laureate Gabriel García Márquez, and others, Contadora was designed as a regional solution to the seemingly interminable civil wars in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua. In all three conflicts, U.S. military aid played a decisive role, though one not always helpful from the perspective of human rights. The other Latin American nations involved in the peace initiative were Mexico, Venezuela, and Panama. Contadora never received support or backing from the United States, which viewed all three wars as part of the larger Cold War conflict between the United States (and its allies) and the Soviet Union. However, Contadora is viewed as an important regional first step in creating peace accords that would eventually end the fighting by 1993 in El Salvador and by 1996 in Guatemala. In Nicaragua, the U.S.-backed *contra* war ground to a halt when the leftist Sandinistas were voted out of office in 1990.[15] Colombia has had a long-standing diplomatic dispute with Nicaragua over San Andrés, an island off the coast of Nicaragua. San Andrés y Providencia is an official Colombian department (or state), and the dispute over whether Nicaragua or Colombia should exert sovereignty over the territory extends back to the nineteenth century. In the late 1920s, a formal treaty between Nicaragua and Colombia settled the matter with Colombia's claim upheld, but the treaty was abrogated by the Nicaraguan revolutionary government that took power in Managua in 1979. Currently, the conflict has degenerated to little more than a territorial maritime dispute, and Colombians take daily flights to San Andrés from the principal mainland cities to enjoy the tropical beaches and practice their Caribbean English.

Certainly, Colombia's manufacture and shipment of illegal narcotics—mostly processed cocaine and heroin—to the European and North American markets have created tensions with bordering countries. Those tensions continue today and involve a mix of illegal activities at borders between Colombia and Brazil to the southwest, Venezuela to the west, Ecuador and Peru due south, and, to the north, Panama. Illegal narcotics are one leg of a three-legged structure of tension. A second leg is the smuggling of commerce, money, and fuel. The final leg of border tensions involves human migration across borders. These tensions have been most prevalent at the extensive Colombian-Venezuelan border. During the 1970s, when the Venezuela oil

boom was in full swing, tens of thousands of Colombians, mostly poor and underskilled, traveled to Venezuela to work low-wage, demeaning jobs. Many returned home as political and social tensions developed in the late 1990s—the tensions that led inexorably to the rise of the mercurial president Hugo Chávez. Chávez's death in 2013 and the arrival of Nicolás Maduro to the Venezuelan presidency—a man with neither the political skill nor charms of Mr. Chávez—has led to a major migration out of that country. As of late 2022, it is estimated that perhaps 2 to 2.8 million Venezuelans have arrived to neighboring Colombia. This will be discussed in further detail in chapter 13. Ecuadorans also travel to Colombia for greater economic opportunity; poor, mostly indigenous Ecuadoran citizens come to Colombia to work, often selling handcrafted items in the urban marketplaces—and they are generally looked down upon by their more affluent, urban Colombian hosts.

Regional relations were severely strained in early March 2008, when the Colombian military briefly entered Ecuadorian territory to kill Raúl Reyes (né Luis Edgar Devia Silva), the number-two commander of the FARC revolutionary group, who had established a camp in Ecuador on the border with Colombia. A total of seventeen people living at the camp were killed in addition to a Colombian soldier. The government of Rafael Correa energetically denounced the raid; Venezuelan president Chávez, in solidarity with his leftist colleague Correa, seemed ready to declare war on Colombia. He called for troops to move toward the Colombian border, but Colombia's president Álvaro Uribe refused to take the bait, and the tensions diminished over time without what many feared might become a three-country war in northern South America.

The 1990s were certainly hectic for Colombia. It was a decade that saw the demise of Pablo Escobar (though not the demise of illegal narcotics shipments out of Colombia), a strengthening leftist insurgency, a growth in paramilitary activity, an internal refugee crisis topped off with a major political crisis, and last, economic collapse at mid-decade. The Colombian nation survived, but the struggles were intense, complex, and seemingly interminable. The political crisis briefly altered the long-standing collaboration between Colombia and the United States. Presidential candidate Ernesto Samper of the Liberal Party was elected in the spring of 1994, but it was quickly revealed, later that year, that he had accepted an illegal infusion of approximately six million dollars into his campaign; the funds evidently had been bundled by drug traffickers. The accusations, which proved mostly true, led to an immediate cooldown between Washington and Bogotá. The climate grew so chilled that President Samper—the sitting president of the Republic of Colombia—had his visa revoked to travel to the United States. Samper survived the crisis, but the Colombian economy headed into a free fall as society reacted to

privatization initiatives of the late 1980s and early 1990s, falling coffee prices during the early 1990s, difficulty in securing investment capital at home and abroad, lower levels of productivity, and limited outside investment due to an ongoing political crisis and social insecurity. When Andrés Pastrana was elected president in 1998, the political crisis with the United States quickly evaporated, and the economy slowly picked up. Pastrana skillfully befriended U.S. president Bill Clinton and convinced the U.S. leader and Congress (but not really the European Union, another legislative body he had courted) of the dire situation in Colombia. Pastrana worried, justifiably so, that a collusion between growers of coca leaf, processors of *pasta básica* and processed cocaine, and the leftist guerilla groups had become solidified. He described an out-of-control leftist armed insurgency raking in annually about five hundred million dollars through kidnappings, extortion, and "protection" of illegal narcotics operations. He asked for help.

Adding to the crises in Colombia at this time, the AUC (the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia—the paramilitary forces), under the command of Carlos Castaño, was fully operational. The "paras," as they colloquially came to be known, targeted the guerilla insurgents and anyone they suspected of collaborating with them. Tens of thousands were murdered during this period, and about two million Colombians were displaced from their homes. President Pastrana had to walk a tightrope whereby he assured world leaders that he was in charge while trying at the same time to convince the world that the social situation in Colombia was tantamount to total chaos. Pastrana gave an interview to the CBS show *60 Minutes* in the fall of 1999; speaking calmly, in perfect English, he described Colombia as a historically stable democracy that needed a major infusion of funds to continue functioning as a democratic entity. President Clinton responded by pushing forward the so-called Plan Colombia—a 1.35-billion-dollar (mostly military) aid package designed to "save" Colombia. Clinton mentioned Colombia in his 2000 State of the Union address, and with minimal debate, the U.S. Congress approved the aid package in the summer of 2000.

The terrorist attack on U.S. soil on September 11, 2001, diverted Washington's attention from Colombia and the rest of the Western Hemisphere. President George W. Bush defined three nations as "evil" (North Korea, Iran, and Iraq) and classified a variety of armed groups as "terrorists," including three such groups residing in Colombia: the AUC, ELN, and FARC. At about the same time, from 1999 to early 2002, President Pastrana made a "sort of" serious attempt at negotiating peace in Colombia, which was responded to with minimal enthusiasm from the leaders of the FARC and EPL (Army of Popular Liberation). Many Colombians concluded that Pastrana had been outmaneuvered by the FARC leadership, and most citizens expressed anger

and humiliation at the insurgents' intransigence. The failed peace together with the growing sense that the country lacked a reliable rudder led to the election of the hard-line governor of Antioquia as president, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, a man who represented neither the Conservative nor Liberal Party structure. He took the oath of office on August 7, 2002.

URIBE AND BUSH: BROTHERS IN ARMS

President Uribe and President George W. Bush became close allies in their respective roles: they shared Texas-sized stories of ranching and rural life, and they were both fond of wearing cowboy boots and hats at press conferences. They developed a genuine friendship, and Colombia quickly became the United States' leading regional ally in the Bush administration's post-9/11 War on Terror. Military aid continued to flow to Colombia; about eleven billion U.S. dollars have been directed there since the beginning of Plan Colombia in 2000, though the initial impetus of Plan Colombia, designed to curb the power of the drug smugglers and help Colombians regain control of their nation through judicial, political, and security reforms, morphed after 9/11 into a war against "terrorists"—particularly the FARC. The rebels proved to be more stubborn and elusive than the president imagined, but significant gains were made during Uribe's eight years as president (2002–2010) against the armed resistance. However, the toll in human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and military scandals—most notoriously, the "false positive" scandal in which some military commanders were inflating body counts by killing innocent civilians, dressing the dead civilians as subversives, and calling in a weak, stenographic press to help celebrate the "victory"—led to broad condemnation by national human rights groups (such as the Jesuit-run think tank and human rights advocacy group in Bogotá, CINEP) and international groups Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, among others.

The grim human rights record has had economic and social consequences, most notably in the form of delayed passage of a free trade agreement (FTA) with Colombia. Passage of the Colombian FTA, a priority of the Bush administration, which succeeded in negotiating the agreement in 2006, was delayed for five years. The delay can be attributed, in large measure, to opposition by Democratic Party union leadership in the United States, which looks unfavorably, in general, on FTAs that have pulled high-paying manufacturing jobs away from the United States and union control. Union leaders and their political allies in the United States scrutinized the Colombian FTA on an added human rights platform. It is estimated that as many as three thousand

eight hundred union leaders in Colombia have been murdered since 1986; but with billions of dollars at stake (in 2009, U.S. imports from Colombia were 11.3 billion dollars, and exports represented 9.4 billion dollars), the FTA was signed in October 2011. President Obama, who vocally denounced the Colombia FTA during his 2008 campaign, reversed his position to the glee of big business. Union representatives in the United States and human rights activists throughout the world fought against passage of the Colombia FTA in the United States Congress, but the fate of the agreement became assured when a Canada-Colombia FTA went into effect by mid-2011 and when China began to make—beginning in the middle of the 2000 decade—significant economic inroads into the Colombian market.

Human rights abuses and stifled economic opportunity have forced many Colombians to leave the country. It is estimated that about five million Colombians live outside the nation, in the United States, Western Europe, and Latin America, and Colombians abroad remitted approximately 4.78 billion U.S. dollars in 2008. That figure fell to 3.9 billion dollars in 2010 due, most likely, to the contraction of the U.S. and European economies. By 2021, about 8.5 billion dollars had been remitted to Colombia as the global COVID-19 pandemic halted travel, but most likely hastened transfer payments from wealthier nations. In 2014, remittance payments to the region were estimated at 62.3 billion dollars. Seven years later, by 2021, that figure had grown to about 131 billion dollars.

ENTER SANTOS

President Juan Manuel Santos, who assumed the Colombian presidency in August 2010, redefined Colombia's international relations in important ways: first—and most significantly—he markedly improved relations with neighboring countries Ecuador and Venezuela and worked in a more deliberate and prudent fashion (over his predecessor) at creating cordial, collaborative relations with important Latin American nations, such as Argentina, Chile, and Peru. Santos looked elsewhere, besides the United States, to open trade dialogue, including countries in Europe, and China. His foreign policy was more balanced and nuanced than that of Uribe, whose foreign policy focused almost exclusively on a sort of obsequious collaboration with the United States.

Second, Santos surprised many by signing, in early June 2011, the *Ley de víctimas*—"Law of Victims"—which affected perhaps four to five million people. This new law recognizes all victims of the Colombian conflict, dating back to 1985, and guarantees reparations in the form of cash payments. It

also, perhaps more significantly, guarantees that the state will work to return lands taken illegally from rightful owners since 1991. The law was seen as an important first step at controlling and repairing some of the damage done in a long, devastating conflict that always seemed too cumbersome to contain.

Mr. Santos was reelected to the presidency in 2014, and his administration will be remembered for the peace accords signed with the FARC in August 2016, resulting in a bilateral cease-fire; the peace accords were rejected in an extremely close plebiscite vote on October 2, 2016. Santos asked both sides to return to the negotiating table—which they did—and a new "updated" version of the agreement emerged and passed through the Colombian House of Representatives on November 30, 2016 (having passed through the Senate a day earlier). For his relentless pursuit of peace with the FARC-EP, Mr. Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize by the Norwegian Nobel Committee; the award was announced on October 7, 2016. Santos is the second Colombian to receive a Nobel award.

Other important initiatives during the Santos presidency focused on infrastructure development in the nation. New highways were commissioned, and a new ultra-modern tunnel connecting Bogotá with the capital of the eastern plains, Villavicencio, has been planned and financed. That project, as of this writing in late 2022, has morphed into an enormous public works project which includes seventeen kilometers of additional roadway, twenty bridges and viaducts, and a total of six new tunnels. The project reflects the importance of incorporating the large swath of eastern plains which, until recently, was articulated to the capital city via a single roadway subject to frequent closures due to catastrophic events such as mudslides. Also, navigation along the Magdalena River is being slowly revived as a concept and reality; steamship service on the mighty Magdalena was prevalent for about a hundred years, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Modern aviation, highways, and automobiles came to dominate transportation networks, which made Magdalena steamship service both cost prohibitive and obsolete. Santos was the sitting president when the new El Dorado airport at Bogotá was inaugurated in 2012. The old airport, which opened in 1959, was demolished, and a modern, efficient airport, financed through a private-public partnership, gained popularity with tourists, businesspeople, Colombians, and non-Colombians alike. It now holds the position of second busiest airport (in terms of passenger volume) in Latin America, following Mexico City's Benito Juárez airport; it moved into that position after surpassing, in 2022, São Paulo's Guarulhos International, though the two are locked in, essentially, a tie for passenger volume.

DUQUE AS PRESIDENT

In 2018, a young lawyer from Bogotá, Iván Duque, was elected president with the strong backing of his mentor, former Colombian president Álvaro Uribe. Duque's foreign policy during his four-year rule (2018–2022) was closely aligned with priorities set in the United States and he was a strong ally of President Donald Trump. Duque, at the bequest of Uribe, acted with benign indifference when it came to implementation of the 2016 Peace Accords and violence continued against union organizers, against former FARC fighters; a sort of sad backsliding seemed to pull the nation in the wrong direction, as the national government mostly looked on. This will be more fully discussed in chapter 13. Duque did visit China in 2019 which marked a clear realization of the Asian nation's interest not just in Colombia, but Latin America in general. Several enormous infrastructure contracts—including construction of the new Bogotá metro—were awarded to Chinese firms. Duque took a hard line against the Maduro government in neighboring Venezuela but did lead in the region in offering refuge to fleeing Venezuelan citizens. When he left office in August 2022, he had a net 74 percent unfavorability rating, the highest in modern Colombian history.

From its place in the economic rivalry between the United States and Great Britain in the early nineteenth century, to the separation of Panama in 1903, and, more recently, its conflict with neighboring Venezuela and Ecuador, Colombia's interactions with the outside world have followed a complex but substantive evolution, developing in response to the nation's needs and aspirations. The foreign press has tended to malign Colombia, focusing on a history of regional conflict, violence, guerilla movements, and drug trafficking. As this chapter has attempted to demonstrate, however, periods of violence and illegal activity are only part of Colombia's story. A spirit of collaboration has long guided Colombia's dealings with the outside world. For example, President Marco Fidel Suárez, in the early twentieth century, initiated diplomatic relations with the United States despite Colombia's lingering resentment over the U.S. intervention at Panama in 1903. He understood the urgent need to collaborate with the growing power to the north. Colombia also collaborated with the Allied powers in World War II, with the United States and the United Nations during the Korean conflict, and with the United States in the establishment of the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps. Additionally, Colombia led a peace campaign with its regional neighbors in the 1980s, in what would be known as the Contadora Initiative. In each case, Colombia demonstrated a willingness to engage in and, indeed, initiate international projects to promote its people, its ideals, and its way of life. Of course, Colombia is not a perfect nation, but it is important that constructive

contributions of Colombia are not simply overlooked or dismissed. This chapter has shown the depth and complexity of Colombia's international relations and the futility of reducing that history to mere statements about drugs and violence. International cooperation and collaboration will offer Colombia opportunities and challenges in the future, but the viability of Colombia as a nation and society is no longer the subject of international debate.

NOTES

1. Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours, 1811, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (Memorial ed., Lipscomb and Bergh, eds.) (Washington, D.C.: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903–1904, 20 vols), 13:40.

2. David Bushnell, "Simón Bolívar and the United States: A Study in Ambivalence," *Air University Review* 37 (1986): 106–12.

3. Ibid.

4. Frank Safford and Marco Palacios, *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 98.

5. Stephen J. Randall, *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Interdependence* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 33.

6. Ibid., 56.

7. Ibid., 83.

8. David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 161.

9. Randall, *Colombia and the United States*, 144.

10. See Michael J. LaRosa, *De la derecha a la izquierda: La Iglesia Católica en la Colombia contemporánea* (Bogotá: Planeta Colombiana Editorial, 2000), chapter 4.

11. E. J. Hobsbawm, "Murderous Colombia," *New York Review of Books*, November 20, 1986.

12. The only other president removed from office in Colombia by *golpe de Estado* during the twentieth century was President Manuel Antonio Sanclemente in 1900.

13. Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia*, 231.

14. These figures are from an excellent 2003 paper presented by Luis Eduardo Fajardo titled "From the Alliance for Progress to the Plan Colombia: A Retrospective Look at U.S. Aid to Colombia," published by the Crisis States Research Center at the London School of Economics and Political Science (UK), 2003.

15. *Contra* is the shortened version of the Spanish word for counterrevolutionary, *contrarevolucionario*. The United States backed the *contras*—described as "freedom fighters" by President Ronald Reagan—against the Marxist-inspired Sandinista government.

Chapter Twelve

Colombians Abroad

About five million Colombian people—roughly a tenth of Colombia's entire population—live outside the country's political boundaries. By comparison, about a million Argentinians live abroad (a little over 2 percent of the nation's forty-four million residents). In the United States, about 2.5 percent of the 320 million U.S. citizens live abroad. All of these numbers are estimates and imperfect because many of those living away from their country of origin are never counted by official census takers.[1]

A number of historic and cultural factors help explain this high emigration percentage of Colombians. This chapter will explore the history of outmigration from Colombia to the world, offering a number of explanations for why Colombians leave their native land. The reasons do not focus exclusively on violence, lack of economic opportunity at home, or other so-called push factors. We adopt a historic view, considering the past eighty years or so of Colombian emigration—1940 to the present. The chapter studies the places where Colombians migrate, perceptions of Colombians abroad, remittance payments sent to Colombia from abroad, and recent tensions between Colombia and Venezuela related to emigration.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS ON COLOMBIAN EMIGRATION

Geography, a factor that defines much of Colombian history, helps explain the restless spirit of the Colombian people. In the densely populated central Andean region of the nation, navigating rugged/mountainous terrain represented a challenge for the people, until the twentieth century. People in small villages wondered what lay beyond the constraints imposed by the

mountains, and they moved out accordingly. In 1949, the great "Berkeley School" geographer James Parsons published his doctoral dissertation on the people and geography of Colombia in book form as *Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia.* In this work, he argued that people from the region of Antioquia (with its capital at Medellín) were especially restless, and determined to shift from a mining-based to agricultural economy at the end of the colonial period. Since then, "migration" and progress have become associated with the character of the people of Antioquia, though Parsons probably overstated the democratic, socially progressive nature of these migrations, and depended too heavily on earlier work from the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner.

Technological changes and developments, as noted in chapter 8, had a sort of existential impact for Colombia. Two early-twentieth-century inventions—the automobile and the airplane—broke Colombia out of centuries of isolation. The airplane was particularly important, and, unsurprisingly, Colombia formed one of the first airlines in the world, SCADTA, in 1919. Flatter nations such as the United States, England, and Argentina took advantage of mid-nineteenth-century railroad infrastructure and development to move people and commerce; they profited handsomely from this new technology. The railroad in Colombia could never quite conquer the nation's geography, so modern movement would have to wait until the twentieth century.

Most Colombians living abroad live in the United States; according to the 2020 United States census, there are about 1.2 million Colombians living in the country. Of course, this is an approximation of a reality that is probably much higher; the reliable and politically neutral Pew Research Center (in a 2017 study) used the 1.2 million figure and Pew figures generally skew higher than official census data. Pew characterizes the community as about 61 percent foreign born with 39 to 40 percent "established"—having lived in the United States for more than twenty years. Sixty percent of the 1.2 million Colombians in the United States are U.S. citizens, and the majority (51 percent) reside in the south. Thirty-one percent live in one state: Florida. After Florida, Colombians are found in significant numbers in New York (especially the Queens neighborhood of Jackson Heights), New Jersey, and California, mostly in Los Angeles. Colombian communities have also been established in Boston, Houston, and, over the past fifteen years, Atlanta. Many individuals from the town of Don Matias, in Antioquia, have migrated to East Boston, a predominantly working-class section of the city.

Large numbers of Colombians in the United States have attained citizenship owing in part to a change in the Colombian legal codes, in the early 1990s. When the Colombians updated their constitution in 1991, via a Constituent Assembly, they deliberately attempted to "open up" the nation to a

more modern, inclusive outlook and identity. They reached out to Colombians living abroad, offering them the opportunity to hold "dual citizenship" and vote in (Colombian) national elections. This meant, in practical terms, that Colombians in the United States could seek and secure U.S. citizenship while holding on to their Colombian passports—that is, their citizenship and connection to loved ones back home—and the emotional tie to *patria.*

Colombians have migrated to Europe, other Latin American countries, and Canada. According to a recent (2021) story published in *El Tiempo* newspaper, the leading nation to receive Colombian migrants (after the United States) is Spain, followed by Venezuela and Ecuador. The attraction to Spain is obvious, for cultural, linguistic, and historic reasons. Until the passage of a 2002 law, Spain facilitated Colombian immigration by not requiring Colombians to enter the nation with a visa, and as many as seven hundred thousand Colombians once resided there. The great economic crisis of Spain, which began in 2008, eased in 2016 and then returned with a vengeance thanks to the COVID-19 crisis, has had a negative effect on migration; but unlike other European nations, Spain has mostly resisted ugly outbreaks of anti-immigrant violence and hostility. The nation has adopted a more "multicultural" perspective (compared with France, to use one example), but the severity and duration of the Spanish economic crisis has forced many Colombian migrants to return home. Significant communities of Colombians live in Canada, Chile, the United Kingdom Argentina, France, and Mexico.

WHY COLOMBIANS LEAVE: A HISTORIC OVERVIEW

Many factors have shaped the Colombian migratory process. Colombians have always been on the move, but early Colombian migrations to the United States date back to the 1930s and 1940s. The numbers, compared to Mexicans, Puerto Ricans (who became U.S. citizens in 1917), and Cubans, were relatively small, and those Colombians who did make the journey north were generally from the professional, artistic/intellectual, or diplomatic class, or they had earned degrees from U.S. universities. One factor that "pulled" Colombians to the United States involved a major change to the U.S. immigration system. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 did away with a 1920s immigration policy based on quotas that favored immigration of people from Ireland, the United Kingdom, and Germany—that is, white people. Following the civil rights struggles in the United States and passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, leaders in the United States realized it was time to reconcile an outdated/racist immigration policy with the new 1960s realities. The 1965 immigration reform focused on specific labor force needs

in the United States and strongly favored family reunification. After 1965, the United States, in theory, would open its doors to people from every corner of the globe, not just a small corner of western Europe.

Colombians took advantage of the new laws, in the 1960s, and arrived to live with family members already established in the United States. Economic conditions at home also played a role. For example, overproduction of coffee led to a "stalled" price in the international market at a time when coffee exports represented a significant segment of overall Colombian GDP. In the early 1950s, coffee exports accounted for about 70 percent of Colombia's GDP, declining, fifty years later, to just under 20 percent. A flattening of the international price of coffee (followed by an all-out collapse in the early 1990s) had deleterious effects on the economy, encouraging out-migration at a time when the United States was encouraging family reunification.

Colombians from the middle sectors—working-class people or *estrato* (stratum) 3, to use a familiar Colombian social-categorization scheme (1, signifying abject poverty; 6, well-off or rich)—were unable to secure meaningful work during frequent economic downturns. They expected more out of life than minimum-wage employment, crumbling public schools for their children, and substandard housing in dense and dangerous neighborhoods. So many left for the *sueño americano*, the American Dream.

BIENVENIDOS TO QUEENS

They arrived at Queens in New York—to the neighborhoods of Elmhurst, Woodside, and Jackson Heights. The gradual economic and social slide of New York City during this time did not deter Colombians from migrating there. As white people abandoned the city for the suburbs during the tumultuous sixties, people from Southeast Asia, Puerto Rico, and Colombia moved in and established roots, taking advantage of a still-strong public education system; they worked at the lower end of the employment market and—in many cases—prospered.

During the 1960s and 1970s, an emergent leftist insurgency, as discussed earlier in this book, drove many Colombians from their homes and forced internal and international migration. Leftist insurgents financed their operations by taking profits away from large-scale landowners and the emergent narcotics business (through extortion, threats, and kidnappings). Landowners, unable to depend on protection from a sluggish, barracks-based Colombian military, or Bogotá-centric government, hired and weaponized paramilitary fighters; these "paras" killed with gusto and little remorse. All of this, plus the nation's capitulation—for a brief period of time—to the narcotics trade,

which grew to cartel-like dimensions, created widespread havoc in the nation. Tensions eased, a bit, when the most notorious drug kingpin, Pablo Escobar, was killed in late 1993. Still, many lower-middle, middle-, and upper-class Colombians fled the nation during these decades, and rather than retrace the well-worn path to Queens, Colombians in the 1980s headed to a younger, closer, sunnier city: Miami.

The out-migration from Colombia climbed during the 1990s thanks to economic policy adopted at home and encouraged by the United States under the banner of "neoliberal" reform. President César Gaviria, who ruled Colombia from 1990 to 1994, unleashed an avalanche of mostly market-based reforms in Colombia designed to strengthen the nation's infrastructure and world standing. These reforms included "privatization of state-owned enterprises, cuts in public expenditures, the elimination of social subsidies and programs and the total opening of the economy to international markets and capital." The results of this massive, rapid push to privatize, in a society without significant social safety nets, was, according to one group of scholars, "disastrous."[2]

This time, Spain and Canada, with their relatively lax immigration policies, were the destinations of choice. From 1995 to 2005, at least three million people migrated to Spain from Romania, Morocco, and many countries of Latin America, including Colombia. Colombians who sought refugee status were often successful in Canadian courts (as opposed to U.S. courts), where they could repeatedly appeal negative judgments. Flexible Canadian laws stood in stark contrast to U.S. immigration laws, which tightened significantly in the wake of the 9/11 (September 11, 2001) terrorist attack on American soil. Canada's immigration laws became more restrictive following the election of Conservative Stephen Harper as prime minister, who served from 2006 to 2015.

By the late 1990s, the economic, social, and political situation in Colombia seemed to be spiraling out of control. An economic collapse in 1999 pushed unemployment over 13 percent (it officially peaked at 15.5 percent in 2002, though the actual rate was much higher). The leftist insurgency had grown substantially (some estimates put the membership of the FARC, at this time, at thirty thousand fighters), and the drug cartels collapsed with pressure from Washington to persecute money-laundering operations. All this had dramatic and negative effects on the Colombian economy and psyche. The U.S. Congress, capitulating to the Clinton administration and Washington lobbyists' warnings of a potential for "a failed state in the American hemisphere," authorized a 1.3-billion-dollar support package to Colombia, known as "Plan Colombia." That money, plus the election of Álvaro Uribe Vélez to the Colombian presidency in 2002, fomented conflict and intensified

out-migration. Colombians fled to the neighboring nations of Venezuela and Ecuador, Spain, the United States, Canada, and other places around the globe.

THE 1980 REFUGEE ACT

During the presidency of Jimmy Carter, the U.S. Congress passed the Refugee Act in 1980, which offered asylum in the United States to people who arrived to the country and demonstrated before a judge a "well-founded fear of persecution" should they return or be deported to their nation of origin. Colombians have actively used the U.S. courts to press asylum petitions, particularly since the mid-1990s, when conflict intensified at all levels.

In 2003, the unrelenting violence in Colombia from paramilitary groups, the army, and leftist insurgencies, meant 11,600 Colombians sought asylum protection in the United States. From 2006 to 2011, 5.5 percent of all asylum seekers to the United States were Colombian nationals. U.S. judges were initially sympathetic to the Colombian conundrum, and in 2002, six thousand Colombians were approved for asylum under the 1980 Refugee Act. This occurred at a time of deepening crisis in Colombia, and it coincided with Álvaro Uribe's *mano dura* military approach and (supposed) solution to the various conflicts. The war intensified at all levels during his first administration (2002–2006). Poor people fled their communities, contributing to an alarming and mounting IDP (internally displaced persons) crisis. Many fled the nation altogether, seeking refugee status in the United States, Canada, Costa Rica, and other places. In 2006, nearly twenty thousand Colombians sought asylum worldwide.

Despite the seemingly robust level at which Colombians received asylum in 2002, Colombians have had to walk an "awkward" path in U.S. courts. On the one hand, they've had to demonstrate a legitimate, documented "well-founded fear of persecution." On the other, petitioning for asylum has forced them to criticize the priorities and efficaciousness of their Colombian government, which received strong political support and massive funding from the United States despite being unable/unwilling to protect its citizens. Thus, Colombians' appearances in U.S. courts discredited their government, and by extension, the foreign policy priorities of the United States. The passage of the 2005 Colombian Law of Justice and Peace, which essentially demobilized the paramilitary forces, caused a sharp drop in the number of successful asylum cases in U.S. courts. In 2006, two thousand cases were approved. By 2011, only 325 Colombians were offered asylum protection in the United States.

THE SPECIAL CASE OF COLOMBIANS IN VENEZUELA

Colombian migration to Venezuela deserves more sustained study because the two nations share a one-thousand-mile border and a complicated, often contentious history, one that goes back to the days of Simón Bolívar. "The liberator" was born in Venezuela, where he is a national symbol and hero; he died—in 1830—disliked and scorned, near Santa Marta, Colombia. Contemporary Colombians have a detached, complex relationship with the nineteenth-century independence leader, given that in 1828, he imposed a dictatorship over the Colombian nation. Yet about twenty years ago, in the mid-2000s, there were perhaps 1.8 million Colombians living in Venezuela. At that time, Venezuela was the leading nation to host Colombians, followed by Europe (Spain, mostly) and the United States. The migration of Colombians to Venezuela began in earnest in the early 1970s with the oil boom that helped modernize and enrich Venezuela. Colombians moved there to take advantage of increasing work opportunities, and they benefited from Venezuelan subsidies on foodstuffs, gasoline, education, transportation, and health services.

The boom lasted into the early 1980s, but overproduction flattened the international price of oil, and Venezuela was forced to cut spending. In early 1989, widespread rioting and discontent over an increase in the price of gasoline and other unpleasant reforms (such as a 30 percent hike in the price of public transportation) were met with police and military brutality, resulting in some three hundred deaths. The accompanying political instability led to at least two attempted military takeovers of the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez; a young military officer named Hugo Chávez Frias, accused of engineering one of the attempts, was briefly jailed.

The Colombian presence in Venezuela is still significant, though a precise count of Colombians living there is almost impossible to determine. Given the porous nature of the border and the often-opaque nature of Colombian legal status in Venezuela, the number of Colombians in Venezuela has been subject to speculation and political manipulation. For example, after Mr. Chávez became president in 1999, he, via a 2004 decree, fast-tracked citizenship for many foreign nationals. As a result, some two hundred thousand people (mostly Colombians) became citizens of Venezuela and were granted the right to vote. The opposition cried foul and claimed that Chávez was stacking the electoral deck with "new" allies.

Overall, Venezuelan-Colombian relations, in recent times, have been tense. During the presidency of Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010), a regional war, Colombia versus Venezuela and Ecuador (see chapter 11), almost broke out, and during his presidency, Mr. Uribe repeatedly charged Mr. Chávez with

supporting and supplying fighters of the rebel FARC army. President Juan Manuel Santos of Colombia normalized relations with Mr. Chávez, who—as noted earlier—died in office in March 2013. But a series of complications created tensions between the Venezuelan government of Nicolás Maduro and Juan Manuel Santos. Those tensions continued during the Duque presidency but with new leadership in Bogotá as of August 2022, relations between the two neighboring Andean nations are on the mend.

Precipitous drops in oil prices on the international market, which started in mid-2014, have wreaked havoc on Venezuelan society and government. Oil accounts for 95 percent of the nation's export earnings, and 25 percent of GDP. Venezuela, it is estimated, has more oil under its subsoil than any other nation on earth. Crude's collapse has had perilous consequences. Widespread shortages and tensions have all but paralyzed Venezuelan society. President Maduro chose, in mid-2015, to blame much of the economic crisis on neighboring Colombia. In August 2015, the Venezuelan leader closed the border after a violent border skirmish injured three Venezuelan soldiers and one civilian. Not only did he close the border, he expelled roughly twenty thousand Colombians living in precarious conditions at a popular crossing point between the two nations.

The thousand-mile border between the two nations has always been ungovernable, uncontrollable, and an open arena for smuggling goods, services, and humans. One plausible explanation for these tensions involves, simply, the price of gasoline. In Venezuela, gasoline is heavily subsidized: It sells for the equivalent of ten U.S. cents per liter (or about 40 cents per gallon) at October 2022 prices. In neighboring Colombia, where the government heavily taxes gasoline, the price basically tracks with the price in the United States—though at this writing, in late 2022, the price of a gallon of gasoline in Colombia (about 2.0 USD after conversion) is significantly cheaper than in the United States. Thus, the incentive for smuggling fuel is high, and Mr. Maduro has painstakingly attempted to deflect the subject of his nation's economic woes by focusing on Colombian "smugglers." In July 2016, the border was opened for two consecutive weekends, and thousands of Venezuelans fled to Colombia to buy cornmeal, flour, and toilet paper—basic supplies unavailable in their nation. On August 11, 2016, Mr. Santos and Mr. Maduro met for four hours in Venezuela to find a solution to the simmering, costly border crisis and closure. They resolved to gradually reopen the border at five monitored checkpoints. The crisis escalated to the point where—with the Venezuelan economy in essentially a free fall of mismanagement and worldwide indifference—it's estimated that about 2.5 million Venezuelans have moved to Colombia where they have received support, both political and financial, from the Colombian government. Gustavo Petro, who became

Colombia's president in August 2022, has prioritized a more balanced, mature relationship with the oil-producing nation to the east and visited Mr. Maduro in Caracas on November 1, 2022. Chapter 13 will focus on Venezuelan migration to Colombia in greater detail.

REMESAS—SENDING MONEY HOME

Colombians who live outside their homeland send considerable sums back to relatives who stay behind. According to a news article published in *El Espectador* (April 2016), the four leading *remesa*-generating countries are the United States, Spain, Panama, and Chile. Chile seems to be an "outlier," yet since 2006, poor people from the Colombian Pacific coast (from places such as Tumaco and Buenaventura) have been making their way to Chile, fleeing perpetual impoverishment, violence, and other degradations. Many Colombians have settled in the northern Chilean city of Antofagasta. By 2014, it was estimated that 6 percent of all migrants to Chile were Colombian nationals.[3]

The word *remesa* translates roughly as "remittance," and as recently as 2008, when *remesa* payments peaked, about 4.78 billion dollars flowed into Colombia. The global economic crisis of 2008–2011 meant a reduction in transfer payments to Colombians at home. In 2010, total *remesas* fell to 3.9 billion dollars, and slipped to 3.8 billion two years later. All of these figures are estimates and only account for transactions that move through banks or other "officially" tracked institutions. A good deal of money moves informally. People bring money in and out of the country in suitcases, though the legal limit of currency brought into or taken out of the nation is set at 10,000 USD.

Remesa payments have rebounded recently. In 2015, remittance payments totaling 4.63 billion dollars represented 1.5 percent of the Colombian GDP for that year.[4] This increase reflects the growing strength of foreign currencies against a devalued *peso.* It also means the payments (in foreign currencies) are worth more to Colombians. *Remesa* payments during the first trimester of 2016 flowed, in descending order, to the Valle del Cauca (Cali), Antioquia (Medellín), and Cundinamarca (Bogotá). Twenty-four percent of these transfers were made through direct deposit to a bank account, but 76 percent, the vast majority, were made *por ventanilla,* or through a Western Union–type arrangement. Sadly, the poorest regions of the nation, the western Chocó and the north coast, received the fewest payments.

Of course, the improving security situation in Colombia in part helps explain the recent increase in funds flowing from abroad through family members and networks. The peace negotiations with the FARC created more

confidence in Colombia's future as a thriving "safe space" for investment, and individuals are beginning to return money to the nation rather than only move funds out of Colombia. During the first part of 2016 Colombians who lived abroad contracted 10 percent of all housing purchases—homes, apartments, and *fincas* (recreational escapes). This phenomenon owes in part to the strength of the dollar against the peso. By 2022, it's estimated that about 8.5 billion dollars were remitted to Colombia from abroad. This dramatic increase is most likely related to the global pandemic; in wealthy nations, such as the United States, direct cash transfer payments from the U.S. government to citizens "transferred" to Colombia though the exact amount is difficult to calculate.

COLOMBIANS ABROAD: SOME NAMES

The data, statistics, and historic analysis offered above can disguise an important reality: the millions of Colombians who leave their homeland are living, breathing human beings. The next section of this chapter will focus on people who have left Colombia recently or are descendants of Colombians who left long ago. In this brief section, we focus only on Colombians who immigrated to the United States.

The Colombian American presence in the United States is more difficult to track than the experience and stories of Mexican Americans or Cuban Americans. There are some obvious historic explanations for this phenomenon. First, the United States' two-thousand-mile border with Mexico, set through conquest in 1848 and finalized by the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, implies that the relationship between the United States and Mexico is long, contiguous, and contentious. The Mexican Revolution (1910–c.1920), pushed about a million Mexicans north—to land that had once been "their" territory. Historians, anthropologists, sociologists, demographers, et al. have been studying this "borderland" for decades, and an entire scholarly subdiscipline has developed, borderland studies, or Chicano/a studies. Activist, philosopher, linguist, and poet Gloria Andalzúa published *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* in 1987. This important work is a meditation on language, culture, feminism, "hybridity," and the Mexican American experience. Appearing a few years prior to Andalzúa's book, Sandra Cisneros wrote *The House on Mango Street*, a (still) popular text that explores the Mexican American experience through a series of "vignettes" (Cisneros grew up in a Chicago neighborhood where Spanish was the favored language). Another author who, more recently, explored Mexican American identity, the border economy, and the cultural contact between Mexico and the United States is the

late Carlos Fuentes, who published the novel *La frontera de cristal* in 1995. That book was translated to English, two years later, as *The Crystal Frontier.*

The great Cuban patriot, poet, essayist, and intellectual José Martí lived in exile in New York before returning to his homeland, where he was killed by Spanish imperial forces opposed to his "revolutionary" ideas calling for independence. Martí's presence in the United States reflected a long tradition of U.S. involvement in the island (the United States in fact, tried to cajole Spain into selling Cuba for 130 million dollars in 1854). The United States had deep economic interests on the island, and those interests increased significantly at the conclusion of the U.S. Civil War and the end of slavery. Slavery remained legal in Cuba until 1878.

In the late 1950s, a great exodus from Cuba occurred when tens of thousands of Cubans fled Fidel Castro's revolution. Many intellectuals left the island and lived (and wrote) in the United States, including the poet Herberto Padilla and novelist/essayist Reinaldo Arenas. In 1992, Cuban-born American journalist/writer Cristina García published the novel *Dreaming in Cuban*, a book that focused on family division and the Cuban experience, both on the island and abroad. Ms. García arrived in New York City in 1961, as a two-year-old.

With regard to the Colombian American tradition, the breadth of literature is less rich and more difficult to categorize. It is also less strident, less political perhaps than some of the literature of exile cited above. Unlike the explosive scenarios that forced many Mexicans and Cubans to flee north, Colombian migration to the United States and other places has been more gradual, with periodic upticks related to socioeconomic circumstances back home. The nation's literary star, Nobel Prize–winning author Gabriel García Márquez, spent little time in the United States, and in fact was denied a visa to visit the United States for many years due to his political work on behalf of the Fidel Castro government. He situated nearly all of his fiction in the tropical land that emerged from his imagination: Macondo. García Márquez published one collection of stories about Colombians abroad. That book, *Doce cuentos peregrinos*, was released in 1992 and concentrated on Colombians traveling in Europe.

A recently published author who does, in fact, reflect on the Colombian American experience is Sergio de la Pava. Mr. de la Pava, son of Colombian immigrants and a practicing public defense attorney in New York City, wrote an ambitious novel titled *A Naked Singularity* in 2008. The book deals with the impossibly complex criminal justice system in the United States, and implies, in no uncertain terms, that justice is not meted out clearly, equally, or fairly in the United States. The background of the book—which weighs in at 678 pages—is the Colombian American reality in the tristate region. His

second work, the 2011 novel *Personae*, focused on the investigation into the death of a 111-year-old Colombian writer; the book contains deep Colombian concerns and refers frequently to Colombia's contemporary history.

James Cañón, born in Ibagué (Colombia), completed a bachelor's degree in advertising at the Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano. In the mid-1990s, he left Colombia for New York City. He completed an MFA at Columbia University and published his first novel, *Tales from the Town of Widows*, in 2007. The book deals with the town of Mariquita (which exists in Colombia); it seems as though Cañón substituted Mariquita for Marquetalia, the small village in Colombia where poor people with land were forced to organize and defend themselves against large landowners who, working in conjunction with military forces, attempted to seize their lands. The military's decision to bomb this territory, in 1964, is generally cited as the initiation of the FARC *guerilla* conflict. Cañón uses this history and Colombia's agrarian conflict, which dates to the 1930s, to both universalize and historicize his novel.

There are, of course, famous Colombians and Colombian Americans who live abroad. John Leguizamo was born in Bogotá in 1964 and four years later left for Jackson Heights, Queens, with his parents. He is a well-known actor, producer, comedian, and Broadway performer, who staged a one-man, semi-autobiographical show in New York City (2010) called *Ghetto Klown*. Maurice Alberto (Mo) Rocca is an American of Colombian descent. His mother moved from Colombia to Washington, D.C., in 1956 and married an Italian American from Massachusetts. Mr. Rocca—a journalist, comedian, writer, television personality, and actor—was born in 1969 and attributes much of his storytelling prowess to his Colombian grandmother, who visited the family in D.C. for long periods of time and transmitted the language, social norms, and culture of Colombia to young Mo.

SOME SUSTAINED (AND UNFORTUNATE) STEREOTYPES

Colombians living abroad face unfortunate, and mostly untrue, negative stereotypes that make life less pleasant. The Colombian passport, for immigration officers around the world, suggests extra caution and often, unusual, humiliating "screening." And while the work of world-renowned masters Fernando Botero and Gabriel García Márquez have both shaped and destroyed some of the more compelling, historic Colombian stereotypes, more people gain access to Colombia through film and television than through gallery shows or a careful reading of *Love in the Time of Cholera.* Over the past forty years, the image of Colombia on screen has been systematic, inaccurate, and devastating—but highly profitable.

It all started in 1983 with Brian De Palma's *Scarface*, a sort-of cult film that introduced murderous, Miami-based Colombian drug traffickers who helped viewers consider non-forestry functions for the chainsaw. In 1989, American novelist Tom Clancy published *Clear and Present Danger*. The book envisioned a covert CIA war against Colombian cartels, with Jack Ryan acting as "an instrument of policy."[5] The 1994 film by the same title starred Harrison Ford in the role of Ryan and grossed hundreds of millions of dollars. It was filmed in many places, including Mexico and Ecuador, but not Colombia. *Blow* (2001), starring Johnny Depp, didn't help ease negative stereotypes concerning Colombians, and *Collateral Damage* in 2002 (with John Leguizamo cast as a cocaine distributor) followed along, refusing to break with the trope of the Colombian as murderous drug thug. The 2011 film *Colombiana*, by French director Olivier Megaton, stayed right on script: it opens with a young girl witnessing the murder of her parents (in Bogotá) and taking up—later in life—the profession of assassin.

The television series produced by Netflix, *Narcos*, dealt with the rise and fall of Pablo Escobar, but in a more nuanced, historically precise manner. The series was a big hit in the U.S. market in 2015. Its renewal for a second season, which began in September 2016, reminds us that murder and mayhem sell. A third and final season concluded the series in September 2017. A prime-time ABC television series has helped shape the image of Colombians living outside of Colombia, while shifting the focus from narcotics to family life in America. Sofia Vergara, the actress from Barranquilla, who plays Gloria Tucker on *Modern Family*, is witty, funny, charismatic, fiery; her character, who mashes up the English language, was remarkably popular in the U.S. television market; the series ran for eleven seasons from 2009–2020. Yet ABC's marketing of Ms. Vergara relied on the same old tired trope: on the network's *Modern Family* website, the first sentence under "character bio" reminds us that "Gloria hails from a lovely little village in Colombia, which also happens to be the murder capital of that fine country." A big improvement over De Palma's chainsaw scene, but the stereotype seems to have infinite staying power.

PEACE PROCESS AND THE GREAT REVERSE MIGRATION?

We have not seen a major reverse migration of Colombians with the signing of peace accords in September 2016 and final congressional approval of the accords in late November of the same year. Insecurity has certainly been a "push" factor of migration, but economic instability, uncertainty, and limited social mobility have, historically, exerted a stronger pressure on migration.

Currently, Colombia has one of the lowest minimum wages in Latin America, at 1,160,000 Colombian pesos per month, (the rate changes each year on 1 January) or, at current exchange rates, about 232 dollars for forty hours of work. The Gini coefficient came in at 54.2 for 2020; the ratio (which measures overall inequality) still indicates high levels of socioeconomic inequality in Colombia, despite the fact that the number has been falling gradually from a high of 60.1 in 2006. Limited social mobility has been a historic challenge in Colombia, and access to better-paying positions is still largely based on "chumminess," not merit. In this regard, of course, Colombia is not alone, and one program, instituted by the Santos government, was designed to provide access to education across the nation and a deeply divided class/racial spectrum. The program, called Ser Pilo Paga [rough translation, "it pays to stay alert"], offered, during the program's existence 2014–2018, ten thousand full university scholarships annually for high scores on the national university entrance exam, known colloquially as the ICFES. The program was actually a "loan" program that would be forgiven once the student graduated from their university program.

But the mood of Western democracies seems to be shifting in a nonimmigration direction. The "Brexit" vote was unexpected and tied largely to British perceptions of itself as a safe, relatively isolated island nation—isolated from the often-tumultuous movements of poor people seeking a better life in Europe. The recent rise and strength of anti-immigrant, right-wing political parties in Europe continues to define European politics and society; in the same vein, the election of Donald Trump to the presidency on November 8, 2016, does not bode well for the aspirations of immigrants seeking to move to the United States from Latin America, or beyond. In fact, Mr. Trump's entire Latin American policy discourse was predicated on a simple assertion: he claimed he would build a two-thousand-mile wall to keep people out, and then deport eleven million people living in the United States with non-regular immigration status.

The Colombian peace process, which lasted for four years (2012–2016) and finally passed through Congress by November 30, 2016, generated a bilateral cease-fire; cessation of hostilities between the government and FARC means, we believe, that fewer Colombians will successfully use asylum as a way of gaining admission to the United States or other Western democracies. The long peace process does not signify the end of all violence, hostility, and persecution in the nation of fifty million persons. But removing the FARC from the battlefield is certainly a step closer to creating a nation that helps its citizens build capacity, advance socially and economically, and contribute to Colombian society from within the Colombian nation. Gustavo Petro, who won the presidency with a clarion call of "Paz Total" has just

begun his administration (as this third edition goes to press) and a seemingly audacious plan for a pacified Colombia by the end of his presidential term.

Working to rebuild a nation that's been neglected for decades could prove daunting for the Colombian people, but Colombians of goodwill—those living in Colombia, and outside the national territory—have a tremendous opportunity to redirect the national narrative and build a more peaceful society that is prosperous for everyone, not just a select, privileged few. Committing to programs that encourage social mobility, better access to education, and greater sharing of the Colombian national wealth will have the salutary effect of keeping more Colombian people in Colombia. Colombians can act boldly—they've demonstrated this characteristic when they rewrote their constitution and committed to, and completed, peace accords with the FARC in 2016. No one wants Colombian perpetual war—the twenty-first-century Colombian version of a fifteenth-century European Hundred Years' War—and neither the Colombian government nor the FARC want to return to the battlefield after a long conflict that dates back, minimally, to 1964. Colombians now have the opportunity to transform society from the unpleasant half-century of war to a more congenial country planning for—perhaps—a century of peace. But planning for and working toward peace takes time, political will, patience, and a sincere capacity to forgive.

NOTES

1. See Yolanda Puyana Villamizar, Amparo Micolta León, and María Cristina Palacio, eds., *Familias Colombianas y migración internacional: entre la distancia y la proximidad* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2003), 45.
2. See Mary C. Waters, Reed Ueda, and Helen B. Marrow, eds., *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); in particular, Luis Eduardo Guarnizo and Marilyn Espitia, "Colombia," 371–86 in that volume.
3. "La migración afrocolombiana," conference given by Prof. María Echeverry Buriticá, August 10, 2016, at The Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, V Taller y Oficio de la Historia, "Cautiverios contemporáneos: tráfico de personas, trata y esclavitud moderna."
4. "Remesas de España, otra vez protagonistas," *El Tiempo*, 25 de julio, 2016, página 1 (economía y negocios).
5. Tom Clancy, *Clear and Present Danger* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1989), 651.

Chapter Thirteen

2016 and Beyond: *¡Basta Ya!*

On November 24, 2022, the sixth anniversary of the signing of the Peace Agreement with the FARC was commemorated. To lend solemnity to the occasion, the celebration was held in the same place where the agreement was signed in 2016, the Teatro Colón in Bogotá. Six years had passed, and a new government, presided over by Gustavo Petro (August 2022–), decided to give the Peace Agreement the importance the previous administration, that of Iván Duque (2018–2022), had not. In this way, an acknowledgment that might seem minor actually showed that the emphasis given during the Duque administration to the "No" faction (those who voted against the Peace Accords during an October 2, 2016, referendum) had changed to "Yes" (i.e., a pro-peace agenda and government).

This change in trend toward "Yes" was also found in the 2022 presidential elections. Four years earlier, a significant percentage of the electorate had favored right-wing positions in the management of public order and in political and economic affairs. Since about 2018, this has changed (ever so slightly), which is why today, in 2023, the country is experiencing a situation closer to political and social polarization. In the 2022 presidential elections, the opposite of the 2016 plebiscite happened: the progressive candidate won the election, but by a narrow margin against the right-wing candidate. Political polarization has been aggravated by a climate of social discontent that is felt throughout the country.

The purpose of this chapter, difficult to define explicitly as history, is to bring up to the present the already-long contemporary history of Colombia we have addressed in previous chapters. Its objective is none other than to point out trends, recall significant events from recent years, and invite reflection on the meaning of those events.

THE ELUSIVE PEACE

In 2011, pursuant to Law 1448 on Victims and Land Restitution, the National Center for Historical Memory was created. This national government entity has as its main objective comprehensive reparations and the right to the truth concerning the violence that has occurred throughout the national territory since 1958. One of the main concerns of this Center, in addition to organizing the new Museum of Memory (currently under construction) and carrying out significant tasks related to human rights, is to recover, preserve, and make known the memory of the victims of said conflict; all this requires research, dissemination of that research, and archival work. The publications have been multiple but one of them stands out: ¡*Basta ya! Colombia: memorias de guerra y dignidad*, released in 2013. The six chapters of this extensive text expose the dimensions and modalities of the war that has occurred in the country, the reasons and transformations of war, justice, the damages and impacts on the victims, and the memories of the survivors; it concludes with a section of recommendations to the government, to different State institutions, and to the residents of the country. In its final chapter, the authors acknowledge that the transition toward peace will be long, since "a decade to transform the State and the cultural traits permeated by the conflict seems to be the minimum required, since it is a system, with its structures and visions of the world, rooted in collective conceptions." The report formulates a right to the truth, the right to justice, the right to reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition.

This document was debated and discussed in different social and political circles in the country, which is why the administration of President Iván Duque wanted to neutralize it. He reiterated a vision that the only conflict in the country was that of the State against terrorism—a thesis coined and dispersed during the first presidency of Álvaro Uribe (2002–2006). With Gustavo Petro assuming the presidency in 2022, this interpretation was reversed, and emphasis was placed on the sociopolitical and historic/economic dimensions of the conflict. Peace in Colombia might seem elusive since signing a document doesn't automatically bring peace. The conflict is too entrenched, too complex, too historic. But from 2012 to 2016, the country experienced a special situation that led to the signing of a peace agreement with the FARC-EP.

We have already mentioned this Peace Process in detail in previous chapters. What interests us now is the final report presented by the Truth Commission in June 2022. *El Acuerdo Final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera* (The Final Agreement to End the Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace) is the full title of what is

commonly called the Peace Agreement with the FARC. This agreement was implemented through Legislative Act 01 of 2017 and Decree 588 of the same year. This included among its decisions the creation of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and No-Repetition, on a temporary and extrajudicial basis, as part of the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparations, and No-Repetition—representing the significant institutional framework that took shape from the Peace Agreement. In this sense, in addition to the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth (CEV—the Spanish acronym), the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) and the Unit for the Search for Persons Reported as Disappeared in the Context and Due to the Conflict were integrated into this wide-scale system seeking truth and justice.

Since their creation, both the CEV and the JEP have been severely criticized from right-wing ideological positions; however, they have fulfilled their objectives and main tasks. The final report of the CEV, a broad set of texts and other materials gathered under the generic title "There is a future if there is truth," was released in mid-2022; this report was the result of collecting 27,268 testimonies from victims, members of the Public Force, businessmen, different women's organizations, the LGBTQ+ population, ex-combatants, and *campesinos* residing in the different regions of the country. The document is organized based on ten themes, including those mentioned above, and concludes with a synthesis that brings together the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for a "no repetition." The Truth Commission understands that this report is its legacy and expressly states this in the volume entitled "Findings and Recommendations," which states, "after fulfilling its mandate, the Commission consolidated a set of findings, recommendations, and lessons learned, which are expressed through narratives, actions, processes, and outcomes, among which is the Final Report. This constitutes the legacy that the Commission places at the disposal of society, the State, the Integral System for peace, the international community, and the Follow-up and Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the recommendations for non-repetition," a legacy that, according to the Commission, rests in the entity that will receive the Archives assembled by the Commission. The report has been disseminated via a transmedia platform that allows wide circulation and consultation of the materials, and it resides in the Museum of Memory of Colombia.

It is evident that one of the main actors, in addition to the previously demobilized movements, the FARC-EP is no longer present as a violent actor. On the one hand, however, although the dismantling of the FARC-EP as an armed movement was formalized, not all its members demobilized; many made the decision to continue fighting, and thus they became criminals by stepping outside the 2016 Agreement. On the other hand, the recognition of

the ELN as a legitimate armed movement has not been recognized by civil society, since the ELN does not meet the four conditions to achieve said status: constituting an organized armed group, having a responsible command, exercising clear territorial control, and respecting International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

Thus, despite all the actions that have been carried out to consolidate a climate of peace in the country, what we call political and social violence has not significantly diminished. It is important to understand that the current situation is not the mere continuation of the previous situation, which we can periodize between 1958 and 2016, since today the demobilized FARC fighters do not have a "formal" belligerent status. On the contrary, although they have been differentiated from the common criminal by their organizational structure, demobilized fighters who commit crimes lose all protections offered by the Peace Accords or other agreements. These crimes include drug trafficking, money and asset laundering, the violent appropriation of land, the disappearance and murder of social leaders, the use of terror as an instrument of control, and, no less serious, organized urban crime and corruption through diversion of public money to their benefit, all while influencing political decisions that protect them. Such rogue criminal groups/activities have been characterized as "Bacrim" (Bandas Criminales or Criminal Gangs) by the national authorities, and there seems to be a consensus that their origin dates back to the demobilization of the paramilitary groups in 2003. That is, there are some groups of people who, after the Accords of Santafé de Ralito on July 15, 2003, through which the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia demobilized, continued to commit crimes. Thus, sadly, demobilizations of either the AUC in 2006 or the FARC-EP in 2016 has not led to total peace over the Colombian national territory.

With regard to massacres and the murder of social leaders, the Institute of Studies for the Development of Peace (Indepaz), reported that from November 2016—the date of the signing of the Peace Agreement—until March 17, 2022, 1,327 leaders and human rights defenders were assassinated, 309 of them in the Department of Cauca, 168 in Antioquia, and 135 in Nariño, without forgetting the events that occurred in twenty-five other departments, in Bogotá (the capital city), and on the island of San Andrés. At the same time, Indepaz has documented that between 2020 and 2022, there were 210 massacres in which 778 people died, events that occurred mainly in the departments (states) of Cauca, Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Nariño, and Valle del Cauca.[1]

Given these figures and the magnitude/power of the criminal gangs in Colombia, the government of President Petro has proposed the development of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement—"Paz Total." In this sense, the

government knows an agreement with the ELN represents an important path toward this goal. President Petro (and many other Colombians) understands that all armed groups that commit crimes in the country must be included, with or without a "belligerent status." This proposal, to which is added the much-needed debate on the current and future war against drugs, has already captured the attention of politicians, academics, journalists, unions, and Colombian society in general. Debating "Total Peace," while seeking viable solutions, will undoubtedly captivate the nation in the coming years. To this is added, of a different magnitude but still affecting the peace and tranquility of Colombians, the increase in common/street crime, especially in the large cities.

THE PANDEMIC

Throughout its history, Colombia has suffered the ravages caused by different epidemics affecting its population. From the now-distant epidemics of smallpox, measles, and influenza introduced by the Spanish during the years of the conquest in the sixteenth century—which caused the deaths of millions of indigenous people—or the cholera epidemic that affected the Republic of New Granada in 1849, until the flu epidemic that struck the entire world when the First World War ended (and which caused the death of some 1,600 Colombians—especially in Bogotá), epidemic disease is well known in the nation. But without underestimating the severity and mortality of the epidemics that occurred throughout the nation's history, the epidemic caused by COVID-19 in recent years, and which is still active although without its devastating effects, has challenged all aspects of social life, economic activities, and political organization of the Colombian nation.

The date, March 6, 2020, is accepted as the date when the first case of COVID-19 was registered in Colombia. A few days later, on March 11, when the national government and the municipal administrations were discussing the action to follow, the mayor of Bogotá, Claudia López, decreed a "yellow alert" and ordered a mandatory preventive isolation for the city from Thursday the 19th until Monday, March 23. This order completely limited the movement of people and vehicles. Although this measure was exploratory, it certainly marked a turning point, since the residents of the capital, and soon all other inhabitants of the country, began to live in severe preventive isolation. Although there were fewer restrictions as of September 2020, only in 2022 were measures significantly lifted.

The pandemic took the whole world by surprise, literally speaking. For this reason, the effects, measured in infections and deaths, were very severe at the

beginning, which revealed limitations in the health systems of every country facing the crisis. Colombia was no exception. Therefore, after a difficult start, the national health system demonstrated the capacity to positively handle the situation. In this sense, in global terms, from March 2020 to December 2022, 6,330,409 cases of infection were confirmed in the country; of these, 141,996 people died, and 6,150,571 recovered. Regarding vaccination, in Colombia, the campaign began in February 2021, with the arrival of fifty thousand doses from the pharmaceutical company Pfizer and the National Vaccination Plan began. After just under a year, by December 2021, 63,992,507 doses had been administered in the country to just over thirty-eight million people. And by January 2023, 72.3 percent of the vaccinated population had already completed the double vaccination program, and 90,101,737 doses had been applied throughout the national territory. The costs of the program: 7.3 trillion pesos (about 1.5 billion U.S. dollars), of which 4.5 trillion pesos were used to buy the vaccines, one trillion to pay the health-care institutions, and five hundred million to cover other costs associated with hospital capacity and supplies required by the National Vaccination Plan.[2]

Undoubtedly, the Ministry of Health successfully coordinated the actions required to overcome the devastating effects of the pandemic. But now that COVID-19 is under control and the incidence of the virus in the country is low, criticism of the comprehensive social security and health system created by Law 100 in 1993 has begun, again, in earnest. After thirty years, the evaluations are disparate, and although no one denies that the system put in place in 1993 is far superior to what Colombians had prior to that year, the current president of the republic hopes to introduce deep reforms, particularly tied to improving the quality of care while controlling interference of the private sector in the administration of the monetary resources provided by the citizens and the State. This is another issue that, together with the pension system, will ignite fierce debates in the near future in Colombia.

ECONOMIC DATA

In a recent OECD report on the Colombian economy, from November 2022, "GDP growth is forecast to slow down sharply, from 8.1% in 2022 to 1.2% in 2023, and to accelerate to 1.7% in 2024." Regarding consumption and investment, the report indicates that both will continue to be moderate given the high inflation, which was 13.12 percent in December 2022, and the high interest rates imposed by the Bank of the Republic, 12 percent in December 2022. Overall, the report predicts, "the economy will slow down significantly in 2023 and 2024. Domestic demand will weaken in 2023, as high levels of

inflation, interest rates and uncertainty weigh on consumers and investors." Regarding exports, the report affirms that they will continue to grow since the country will benefit from a greater demand for oil from places other than Russia; this should contribute more resources to the nation's fiscal revenues. An increase in tax revenue is expected, and this projected increase "will allow for gradual fiscal consolidation, while maintaining room for maneuvers/spending to support the most vulnerable"; the report estimates that "central government spending will grow a nominal 15% in 2023 . . . but mainly due to the increase in social spending." A problem currently faced by the government involves fuel prices, not only due to variations in international prices but particularly due to the need to control and reduce the fuel subsidies: fuel subsidies represented a cost of about 2 percent of total GDP in 2022 and are estimated to cost 1.5 percent in 2023.[3]

Despite what this data suggests, the overall economic mood of Colombian citizens is gloomy. On the one hand, the change of government in August 2022 generated panic in some sectors, concern in others, and in many, the illusory expectation that a progressive regime would bring economic prosperity and redemption not only for the most vulnerable but also for the battered middle classes—sectors hard hit by the effects of the pandemic and mostly left out of the support measures offered by the national government. On the other hand, the pandemic seriously affected the consumption capacity of Colombians, which gave rise to a generalized social pessimism aggravated when decades of low inflation dramatically reversed course. No less important has been the prolonged and severe weather—mostly in the form of devastating rains—in many regions of the country, causing tragedies, isolations, production losses, and a decrease in the marketing of products. Finally, without pretending to be exhaustive, the effects on the country of the crises in the world economy as well as the questioning of the benefits of globalization, has fed aggressive nationalisms that fuel populism on the political left and right.

The foregoing contrasts with positive activity and prosperity in other sectors such as "the creative economies," cultural manifestations, and sports, among others. Following historical trends, the magnitude and strength of the service sector will continue to grow and play an ever-larger role in the Colombian economy.

MIGRATORY PROCESSES

Venezuelans, historic cousins to Colombians, have been migrating south and west for centuries, but the pace has increased during the past decade, especially since 2017, when fluctuations in the petroleum markets, increased

authoritarianism in Caracas, and the imposition of financial restrictions by the Trump administration in Washington conspired to all but collapse the Venezuelan economy. By some estimates, 75 percent of the nation's GDP disappeared between 2014 and 2020, a remarkable reversal for a once-prosperous and thriving nation.

Approximately seven million Venezuelans, or 24 percent of the national population of thirty million, have left the nation over the past decade. The vast majority have traveled south and west, to Colombia, which shares a 2,200-kilometer border with the Andean nation. Colombia has absorbed about 2.5 million Venezuelans during this time period, the majority arriving during a five- to six-year period, from 2017 to 2022. Colombia, as noted previously in this text, does not have historic experiences or a long tradition of receiving vast numbers of immigrations. Colombia's history is distinct, in this regard, from other Latin American nations, that is, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, and to some degree, Cuba and Mexico. Yet Colombia seems to have learned some valuable lessons from the recent migratory processes in other places on the planet.

During the final days of the Santos administration (2010–2018), the Colombian government established a "Special Permission" policy whereby arriving Venezuelans would be offered, upon application, a two-year residency in Colombia, that is, legal permission to stay in the Colombian Republic. When Iván Duque became president in August 2018, tensions flared with Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, resulting in a fractured political relationship between the two countries and an all but closing of the "official" borders between the two nations in February 2019. Despite the political impasse between Bogotá and Caracas, Venezuelans continued to migrate; about 60 percent of all migrants have crossed via "irregular" (i.e., clandestine and often dangerous) border crossings.

Despite a slow start in the presidency, Mr. Duque seized an opportunity for world leadership, and in May 2021, he announced TPS (Temporary Protective Status) to Venezuelan migrants. Colombia offered ten-year access to public education, health care, and the labor market, and as of July 2022, about 1.7 million Venezuelans have been approved for TPS through this process. Colombia has defied expectations and become a model for welcoming migrants, despite difficult socioeconomic conditions in the nation of fifty million; all this occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing crises.

Colombia's "generosity" is not entirely altruistic. The boundary between the two nations has been porous for centuries, and a great deal of commerce moves across the 2,200-kilometer border—some taxed, much of it off the books. The tragic collapse of the Venezuelan economy and political system

represents certain opportunities for Colombia, including the sale of manufactured goods, foodstuffs, and a host of other products.

Nicolás Maduro has not been a particularly enlightened leader in the Latin American region, and his erratic rule stands in sharp contrast to the pragmatic electoral processes on display in neighboring Colombia. Certainly the past three Colombian presidents (including Mr. Petro) have been far from perfect, but Juan Manuel Santos did push through significant peace accords with the FARC in 2016 and won a Nobel Peace Prize. Mr. Duque is considered a failed president, but he did rule during the devastating COVID crisis and will be known for pragmatic economic outreach to China, an ambitious and progressive environmental agenda, and of course, his TPS program for Venezuelans—many of whom have literally had to walk to Colombia (*los caminantes*) seeking security and survival. One of Gustavo Petro's first moves as president? A trip to Caracas to initiate discussions, which he hopes will lead to full restoration of diplomatic and consular relations between the two nations.

While president, Duque spoke at the 2020 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. There, he outlined a progressive agenda in terms of environmental concerns for the nation over which he presided, but additionally, he seemed to understand the regional dimensions of sustainability. He went on record to state that deforestation had been reduced by 19 percent in Colombia during his tenure in office (which began in August 2018), and he announced that wind and solar networks in the nation had expanded sixfold during his administration. About half the nation of Colombia is Amazon jungle, and Colombia is home to a unique ecosystem in the Americas—high-altitude terrain above the forest line with spongelike soils called *paramos*, sometimes referred to as "water towers" since they capture and diffuse water in much the same way glaciers function in less tropical regions. Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela are the three nations in South America with this unusual ecosystem, characterized by the emblematic species of flowering shrubs known locally as *frailejones*.

A Colombian president speaking in Switzerland about sustainability seems somewhat out of sync, but the fact is, Colombia is starting to recognize its role in saving our planet. Young voters are concerned with sustainability agendas, and the elected vice president of Colombia, Francine Márquez, is an award-winning environmental activist, having won a Goldman Prize in 2018. The Goldman is billed as a sort of "Nobel" for environmental work. She began her activism in opposition to environmentally degrading gold mining in and around her southwest Colombian town and was a fierce advocate, on the campaign trail, for moving away from oil and coal (carbon) dependence. She won over younger voters in the nation who share her concern

with preserving Colombia's stunning and abundant natural resources. Young people who supported the Petro/Márquez ticket have, perhaps, a greater stake in preserving the planet and seem unwilling (like their grandparents) to take Colombian and worldwide natural resources mostly for granted.

TROUBLE ON THE STREETS OF COLOMBIA

Mr. Duque's presidency might be viewed as having collapsed on the streets of Bogotá in November 2019, when Dilan Cruz was killed during peaceful protests associated with a "Paro Nacional"—a National Strike. Cruz was a high school student who died on November 25, after being struck in the head, two days earlier, by a tear gas canister-projectile in the center of the nation's capital. He died in San Ignacio Hospital, on the campus of the Javeriana University. The projectile was fired by an officer of the ESMAD—the Escuadrón Movíl Antidisturbios (the Riot Police—authorized to use lethal force). The death of Cruz unleashed a kind of national catharsis, and many viewed this tragedy as a slide back to the bad old days—when security forces, paramilitary groups, the army, and the insurgency murdered fellow Colombians with neither accountability nor remorse.

People, prior to COVID-19, had grown tired of perceived and actual corruption, rumors of a reduction in the paltry national minimum wage, growing inequality, and increased violence in the countryside where activists and community leaders were being killed with impunity. After so much optimism surrounding the peace process between the Colombian government and the FARC (2012–2016), followed by the international attention focused on Colombia as a society at peace, plus the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to former president Santos in 2016, Colombians, during the 2019 protests, were reacting to a sense that things were falling apart.

Then things got worse. COVID-19 (as discussed above) and massive street protests nationwide turned violent and tragic in 2021. The 2019 protests were a sort of (mostly) peaceful warmup compared to what would occur two years later, at the height of the COVID-19 crisis, blindsiding, or so it appeared, the Duque government, which seemed wholly unable to understand the extent of national angst.

The 2021 protests were set up when the president attempted to raise taxes and privatize the health-care system. To help combat starvation caused by the devastating pandemic, Mr. Duque authorized some transfer payments to the poorest Colombians—about 43 dollars per month via a program called "Ingreso Solidario." The program covered approximately three million Colombians, but the need was in excess of fifteen million. The president

decided to raise taxes on the middle class (on food and fuel) and proposed changes to the health-care network—essentially planning to privatize the system during the pandemic. This pushed forward massive street protests in major cities of the nation, which lasted through May. On May 2, given the extent of the protests, the president withdrew his tax-hike proposal, but by that point, the battle was engaged, and there was no turning back. The southwest city of Cali suffered significant roadblocks, violence, and death. The region has a long history of indigenous protest (in September 2020, activists in Popayán tore down a statue of the Spanish conqueror Sebastián de Belalcazar, who wreaked havoc over the Colombian land and people during his sixteenth-century murderous conquest from Ecuador). Security forces throughout the nation overreached during the protests, causing national indignation. Mr. Duque never seemed to grasp the significance of popular protest in Latin America generally, and in his own nation specifically. The Colombian president's overall mandate included moving forward with the congressionally approved, internationally sanctioned peace plan, controlling the economy, supporting social development of the people, and managing a nation of fifty million. When the streets filled with demonstrators, he seemed, simply, unable to effectively lead.

Thus, the turn left. In June 2022, Gustavo Petro was elected to a four-year term as president. His opposition: Rodolfo Hernández Suárez, a businessman and engineer from Bucaramanga who served as that city's mayor. Hernández ran a short-lived campaign and lost to the better-known—though certainly not the "establishment favorite"—Petro. An economist from the Externado University, Mr. Petro is unlike any recent Colombian president: He's clearly from the progressive left, and he was a member of the M-19 insurgency group. His election to the nation's highest office in mid-2022 surprised many and broke the common narrative of establishment, essentially conservative and status quo–seeking white male presidents from privileged backgrounds. With the exception of Marco Fidel Suárez (1918–1921) and Belisario Betancur (1982–1986), virtually all of Colombia's twentieth- and twenty-first-century presidents fit this "establishment" mold.

Petro is from Córdoba, on the coast of Colombia, and as a seventeen-year-old, he joined the M-19 insurgency and rose to leadership positions within the organization. The M-19 demobilized in 1990. Petro was arrested, tortured, and jailed during his time with the organization—joining Michelle Bachelet (Chile) and Dilma Rousseff (Brazil) as Latin American chief executives who have been tortured by their governments. Petro's victory has signaled a significant shift for the region, away from business as usual, away from the neoliberal thinking of the 1990s, which resulted in much unemployment, misery for the people, and enrichment for the well-educated and well-connected.

Recently, progressive leaders have come to office in Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Peru, and, most significantly, Brazil. Colombia had long been the holdout, but Petro arrived to office using an unapologetically progressive agenda, with strong backing from young people and people of color—groups traditionally left out of politics, and by extension, Colombian society.

On the afternoon of Sunday, August 7, 2022, Mr. Petro was inaugurated at the Plaza Bolívar in the nation's capital. He promised to advance a pro-environmentalist agenda and declared a halt to new oil production in the nation. Colombia's leading export, it should be noted, is crude petroleum, but the Colombian nation was hardly paralyzed by Petro's declaration of war on oil—though people have grumbled while watching the price of gasoline and diesel steadily head north. Petro appointed the respected, internationalist José Antonio Ocampo as minister of finance, thus demonstrating a clear trend in Colombian politics and society: a centrist, pragmatic approach to economic management.

Petro has spoken about inequality: As noted above, Colombia is one of the most unequal nations in the world, as measured by the Gini coefficient. The president's plan to raise taxes on the wealthiest four thousand individuals is part of a strategy designed to show more solidarity with the poor and those who live on Colombia's paltry 1.3-million-peso-per-month minimum wage—about 250 U.S. dollars by the 2023 exchange rate. His first moves as president—visiting Caracas to begin normalization of diplomatic and political relations with Venezuela, and immediately announcing the restoration of peace talks with the ELN—won him accolades from the Colombian people, internationalists, and Latin American and other diplomats around the world. On the last day of 2022, Mr. Petro announced a six-month bilateral cease-fire with the five leading armed groups still active in Colombia, including the ELN. But the ELN never agreed to this "agreement," resulting in international embarrassment for the Petro administration while demonstrating the difficulties of negotiating with a group that lacks clear command and control structure. After this December dustup, in February 2023 peace talks with the ELN resumed in Mexico City. The challenges are enormous for Mr. Petro and the government that has taken shape in Bogotá as we prepare this third edition. The prudent, moderate approach of Mr. Petro has been welcomed, both within Colombia and the Americas. The critics on the far-right declared that a Petro presidency would represent a "Castro/Chavista" takeover of the Andean nation, but most Colombians understand clearly that Cuba's Fidel Castro (d. 2016) and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez (d. 2013) will not be showing up anytime soon to command Colombia's government.

TOURISM: THE CONTEMPORARY TREND

Costa Rica, with a GDP of 64.2 billion U.S. dollars [2021] and a population of five million, has developed a thriving tourism industry over the past thirty years or so. With a tropical climate, a reputation as a peaceful, well-managed, and fairly progressive nation, Costa Rica received 3.1 million tourists in 2019 as compared to the 4.5 million tourists who arrived to Colombia the same year. Colombia's GDP is over five times that of Costa Rica's, and the population is ten times larger. On the Global Biodiversity Index, Colombia ranks number 3; Costa Rica, number 28.

"Pura Vida" [Pure Life] is the catchy, easy-to-remember slogan adopted by the Costa Rican tourism sector. Costa Rica looks different from its Central American neighbors. It repudiated its national army in 1949, the nation managed to avoid the civil wars of the Central American region in the 1970s and 1980s, and it moved in a direction opposite of Nicaragua and Panama: Nicaragua opted for revolution in 1979, and Panama struggled under the strongman rule of Manuel Noriega (during the 1980s; Noriega was removed from power in 1989, with help from the United States military).

Colombia's unenergetic approach to tourism has changed with the signing of the Peace Accords in 2016. Tourism increased during the years of the peace talks (2012–2016), and it grew to 4.5 million foreign visitors by 2019, but declined by 73 percent during the pandemic year. In 2021, about 2.1 million tourists from all over the world visited Colombia. The problem in Colombia is not a lack of tourism sites or significant ecological tourism offerings; there is an abundance of natural beauty, flora, and fauna, landing Colombia high on the list of the world's seventeen megadiverse countries. There are also the historic cities, such as Cartagena, Mompox, Popayán and others—unique in terms of world culture and heritage—as well as nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The problem is a basic lack of infrastructure that is always necessary to grow a tourism sector. Transportation is a key concern: There's no easy, logical, or seamless way to get from the Bogotá airport—the second busiest in Latin America, as of this writing—to some of the beautiful towns on the Savannah de Bogotá. The small town of Sopó, with a fascinating colonial era church, sits a mere thirty-seven kilometers from the airport, but it's nearly impossible to visit without a private car or driver. Car rental companies are few and far between in Colombia, and rental rates/insurance costs are set for the wealthiest of international tourists. Hotel offerings range from luxurious five-star hotels to "grim" hostels, and investment in logical transportation networks, tourist style hotels, and eco-lodges can only help expand the Colombian tourism sector in the years to come.

An international development organization in Washington, DC—DAI—was awarded a forty-million-dollar program in 2022 through USAID to work with the Colombian tourism industry. The idea is to push forward a vast, nationwide, five-year tourism plan focused on sustainable nature tourism that both protects and values Colombia's rich biodiversity and better connects rural Colombian communities with the national economy following hundreds of years of isolation. Former vice minister of tourism (2019–2021) Julian Guerrero will serve as "chief of party" for this initiative; he was the director of "ProColombia," which promotes international tourism under the auspices of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism. The agenda for this project is ambitious and includes nature tourism in the Putumayo, in the Central/South Pacific, and the eastern plains—the so-called *llanos orientales*. Chocó is included in the project, as is the National Park at Sumapaz on the savannah of Bogotá. Also on the agenda: the Cocora Valley, which is in the Parque Nacional Natural de los Nevados, home to the Colombian national tree—the Quindío wax palm—the tall, skinny, prehistoric-looking palm trees that grace this temperate valley. Presently, there is a nice synergy of international funding finding a place to promote ecotourism at a time when the nation seems ready to adopt a "culture of tourism" that welcomes tourists and takes pride in sharing the nation's natural jewels with the world—concepts that exist in abundance in Costa Rica and Peru, but that are entirely new to Colombia. The environmentally sustainable work of the vice president of the nation, plus—we hope—the continued pacification of the Colombian nation could lead us to a new international tourism moniker for Colombia: "Café con Paz." Or, as proposed by the new USAID-funded initiative, "Destino Naturaleza" [rough translation: Nature Is Our Destination]. It's not as catchy as "Pura Vida," but it's a nice start.

One promoter of Colombian tourism and culture came from an unexpected place: Disney Studios. In November 2021, Disney released the animated film *Encanto*—a surprise blockbuster that has earned more than a quarter billion dollars in revenues. As noted earlier in this text, the film won the Academy Award in 2022 for Best Animated Film.

Encanto is the story of the Madrigal family and is set against the Colombian Cocora Valley. The house in the movie, which has magical powers, is a sort of traditional "Cafetal"—or coffee plantation house of the coffee-growing region of Colombia. The film introduces viewers to the beauty of the flora and fauna of Colombia, and the yellow butterflies, a trademark of García Márquez's literature, make an appearance in the film. The movie only "tangentially" deals with the dark side of Colombian history—the family had to migrate from their home due to violence, which is depicted in two quick background scenes designed to inform rather than terrify.

The music of *Encanto* was written by Puerto Rican Lin-Manuel Miranda, and musical performances by Carlos Vives, Maluma, and Sebastián Yatra give the film a uniquely Colombian tone. John Leguizamo, the Colombian American actor and comedian, is one of the voices in this animation.

We can't say what the next decade will bring to the South American nation of fifty million people. We do know that a serious search for peace is underway, and new voices have entered the government; younger people in Colombia are committed to building a more prosperous nation that distributes the richness of society more equitably. Merging the economic, political, and sociocultural ideals in a country as divided and diverse as Colombia is of existential importance and seems to be the project that is presently underway.

NOTES

1. Infobae, "1327 lideres sociales y firmantes de la paz han sido asesinados tras la firma del Acuerdo en Colombia," 18 de marzo de 2022, www.infobae.com, consulted January 26, 2023.
2. We use a conversión of five thousand Colombian pesos to one U.S. dollar—the exchange rate as of January 2023.
3. Economic Panorama of Colombia—OECD. Country Note, November 2022. www.oecd.org, consulted January 26, 2023.

Conclusion

The Colombian nation endures through a history that is tragic, stable, and dynamic. Colombians do not hide from their past. Indeed, they have learned to confront and incorporate segments of their history that might be more convenient to forget.

Contemporary Colombian currency currently in circulation tells a story about how the nation considers its past. The currency features heroes from politics and literature who have met tragedy: Policarpa Salavarrieta—martyred heroine of the independence struggle who was executed by Crown loyalists in 1817—is remembered on the ten-thousand-peso note. Renowned poet José Asunción Silva, who died by suicide in 1896, is represented on the five-thousand-peso note, and Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, whose murder on April 9, 1948, touched off urban rioting known simply as the *nueve de abril*, is commemorated on the one-thousand-peso note, along with a couple of his trademark phrases. One of the phrases, "*el pueblo es superior a sus dirigentes*" ("the people are better than their leaders"), shows the politician's ironic skepticism of "politicians." In August 2016, the Colombian government released a new fifty thousand Colombian *peso* note that featured the nation's literary sensation, Gabriel García Márquez (1927–2014). While certainly not a tragic figure, García Márquez spent most of his adult life living outside of the South American nation. He wrote his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in Mexico City, which is where he died in April 2014.

Geography, more than the Colombian currency, explains the Colombian condition; the land's physical contrasts are dramatic, imposing isolation on people who live in the same nation yet identify with their region and neighbors rather than their fellow citizens. That a nation would be constructed out of this complexity is itself worthy of comment. The only time in modern Colombian history when the nation actually "deconstructed" was during

a hostile, outside intervention, in 1903, when the United States organized and executed the separation of the province of Panama from the Colombian mainland. The Province of Panama's separation was a direct function of Colombia's unique global geographic position, that is, the nation straddles two oceans. In the historic period prior to modern aviation, a small strip of Colombian land was highly coveted. Today, that territory is known as the Republic of Panama.

Many forces and factors have come together to help unify Colombia. Constitutional processes have shaped Colombia's history during the past two hundred years, as demonstrated in chapter 3; institutions have been forged to unite what appeared permanently fractured. The Catholic Church helped unify and, on occasion, divide the nation. Yet a common language, a consolidated, elite-driven historical narrative, and a Western-focused education system all contributed to the forging of the Colombian nation.

The first-time visitor to Colombia—Mutis, Codazzi, and Humboldt, among the most prominent and productive—is struck by the nation's natural beauty, lush vegetation, and biodiversity. However, until the construction of modern transportation and communication networks, Colombia remained somewhat of an enigma to the outside world. David Bushnell's prescient comment, in the introduction to his 1993 textbook, demonstrates this point: "Colombia today is the least studied and least understood of the major Latin American nations." Bushnell was reiterating the fact that Colombia's history is not easily understood or compartmentalized since it does not follow the historiographical patterns developed by twentieth-century historians, especially those writing from afar. Colombia lacked the long, strong pattern of immigration found in places such as the United States, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Peru, and Uruguay. Colombia also lacked revolutionary tumult and military governance; there was no twentieth-century sociopolitical "revolution" similar to those in Mexico, Cuba, or Nicaragua, and there was no dramatic military intervention, as experienced in Brazil in 1964, Peru in 1968, Chile in 1973, and Argentina in the mid-1970s. Populism in Latin America became an important academic topic in the 1970s and 1980s, but research on populism focused on Brazil under Getúlio Vargas, Peru under Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, Mexico under Lázaro Cárdenas, or Argentina under the Peróns; it was seen as improbable to study Colombian populism because the populist leader, Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, died young and tragically, before ever assuming national power.[1]

The outstanding generation of Colombian social historians, forged in the 1960s with the path-breaking work of Professor Jaime Jaramillo Uribe, has shown the world the dynamism of Colombia's history. These historians have emphasized the importance of understanding Colombia on its own

terms. Models and theories drawn up elsewhere—whether they are called "dependency theory," "import-substitution industrialization," or "developmentalism"—never quite resonate or translate entirely in Colombia. Learning about Colombia requires dedication and significant time spent in the country. Unfortunately, a U.S. State Department travel warning (most recently updated on January 4, 2023, to a "Level 3" warning), which recommends "Reconsider Travel to Colombia," emphasizes crime, terrorism, civil unrest, and kidnapping. This underscores a widely held perception that Colombia is more dangerous than most places in the Western Hemisphere which conspires to keep foreign researchers away from Colombian archives and document collections.

Our book has attempted to show that Colombia, despite its complex historical record, endures, and that the focus on political violence, illegal narcotics, and corruption hides a less dramatic but more important story of constitutional procedure, governments that regularly transfer power after elections, and a concern with social rights of the people, as evidenced by the rethinking and rewriting of the Colombian constitution in 1991. The nation is sustained not only by a constitution and stable, though imperfect government but by infrastructure (outlined in chapter 8) that has sought to unite the nation. The most conspicuous, remarkable aspect of Colombia, though, is its diverse, complex, and original cultural development. Colombians rally more enthusiastically around their cultural ambassadors than around politicians and business leaders. Colombian cyclists who race in (and win) the Tour de France, golfers who compete on the PGA tour, painters whose work features in galleries all over the world, and writers who have won the Nobel Prize are the topic of daily conversations.

Colombian culture is extraordinarily vibrant, but it has been too often overshadowed by the worldwide media headlines that focus—for reasons that are both functional and profitable—on Colombia "the dangerous." Writers, painters, poets, directors of theater, and scholars from diverse disciplines have been animated by "the crisis" (an example of which is represented by the critically acclaimed 1999 gallery show at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, "Arte y Violencia en Colombia Desde 1948"),[2] and at the same time, they have worked to challenge the official, accepted historical narrative while pushing back against the forces of hierarchy, elitism, and social stratification. Musicians such as Shakira, Maluma, J Balvin, Sebastián Obando Giraldo (Sebastián Yatra), and many others are forcing a new appreciation—a new listening—for a Colombia that's at once rhythmic and more harmonious than the Colombia of centuries past.

Which history—the catastrophic or cohesive—is the "correct" history of Colombia? We hope that we have shown how that question is both perilous in

its implications and impossible to answer. Colombian history is remarkably dynamic, and historians arrive at distinctly different conclusions when writing about the same time period or event. We wanted, in this work, to focus on the forces of unity, the dynamics that we believe have held Colombia together over time. Other works—scholarly and not so scholarly—study Colombia from the perspective of disintegration, failure, catastrophe, or division. Our interpretations and emphases are not necessarily "correct," and future scholars will likely contradict what we have offered here. That is the territory of our profession, which moves and changes as interpretations develop, are debated and promulgated, and are supported or rejected over time. While interpretations will vary, we have little doubt that Colombia the nation will endure and that Colombians will continue to face the challenges ahead of them with a sound spirit of skepticism grounded in hope, fortitude, and the dignity that seems to define them as a people. The quest for a better future is the goal of all civilized peoples, and Colombians have been moving toward that goal—not always evenly, but in a systematic, remarkably creative and thoroughly Colombian fashion.

NOTES

1. Scholars have hardly ignored Gaitán, but the study of Colombian populism would require particular creativity and judiciousness with sources, as demonstrated in Herbert "Tico" Braun's book *The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia* (1985).
2. This translates as "Art and Violence in Colombia since 1948."

Colombian Chronology, 1810–2022

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1810	—Autonomous Provincial Junta —Supreme Junta of Santafé —Act of 20 of July and expulsion of the viceroy —First battle of the National Guard		—Newspapers: *La Constitución Felíz* and *Diario Político de Santafé* —Composition of first patriotic song by José María Salazar —In Cartagena, *Argos Americano* published
1811	—Constitution of Cundinamarca —Federal pact signed —Declaration of Independence of Cartagena —Constitution of Tunja		Antonio Nariño publishes *La Bagatela*
1812	Constitution of Antioquia		

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1813	—"Admirable Campaign" of Simón Bolívar —Declaration of Independence of Tunja and Cundinamarca —Nariño's military campaign under way		—Francisco José de Caldas organizes military academy in Medellín —Publication in Mompox of catechism or *Instrucción Popular de Fernández de Sotomayor*
1814		—Sale of communal lands (*ejidos*) authorized —Slaves freed in Antioquia	
1815	Cartagena under siege by Pablo Morillo's army		
1816	—Pablo Morillo takes Santafé —Regime of Terror begins —Viceroyalty re-established		
1819	—Congress of Angostura —Campaign of Freedom —Battle of Boyacá —Fundamental Letter: Republic of Colombia created		
1820	Simón Bolívar declared president by Angostura Congress	—Government declares that schools are to be founded in all villages and towns —First Masonic lodge in Bogotá	

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1821	—Cúcuta Congress promulgates new constitution—centralist —Panama declares independence and annexes itself to Colombia	—Free womb law; children of slaves born free —Law—freedom of press —First steamships arrive on Colombian coasts	—Education system of Joseph Lancaster pushed forward in Colombia —French mission hired to push agricultural scientific research
1822	—United States recognizes Colombia —Meeting between Bolívar and San Martín in Guayaquil —Government regulates ministries and organizes properties in the country	In Bogotá, "Industrial Society" created to build an earthenware industry	Colegio de Antioquia founded
1823			National Museum founded
1824	Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation between United States and Colombia	English "Colombian Mining Association" re-establishes mining activity in Antioquia	
1825	—Great Britain recognizes Colombia and signs treaty of friendship, commerce and navigation —Abolition of slave trade	—Census taken: 1,129,200 people —Abolition of colonial taxes	—Newspaper: *La Miscelánea* —Exploration for possible interoceanic route through Panama
1826	—Rebellion in Venezuela against Vice President Santander —Anfictiónico Congress in Panama	Protective laws for indigenous persons	—Central University created, Bogotá —General Law of Public Instruction passed

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1828	—Ocaña Convention —Dictatorship of Bolívar —War with Peru	Founding of Pácora in new colonization zone, Antioquia	Painter José María Espinosa creates portrait of Simón Bolívar
1829	Military uprising against Bolívar's dictatorship	Shipyard project, to build steamships	Juan García del Río writes *Meditaciones Colombianas*
1830	—Constitutional assembly creates new constitution —Gran Colombia dissolves when Venezuela and Ecuador separate —Simón Bolívar dies	Special privileges offered to those producing bowls, glass, linen, iron, paper, and textiles	
1832	—New constitution creates Republic of New Granada —Francisco de Paula Santander named president	All Indian tribute abolished	Colegio de La Merced created for women
1834		—Concession granted for steamship navigation on the Magdalena	Three-color flag (yellow, blue, and red) approved as national flag
1835	The Vatican recognizes New Granada	—Census taken: 1,570,900 —National system of currency created —First exportation of coffee	Theories of Jeremy Bentham re-emerge in university curricula
1837	—José Ignacio de Márquez elected new president —Penal code drawn up	Economic protection developed	

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
1839	Civil war: "The Supremes" (1839–1842); various provinces rebel against central government, which wins		
1840		Coffee cultivation begins near Bogotá	
1841	Pedro Alcántara Herrán is president of the republic	Judas Tadeo Landínez opens the "Compañía de Giro y Descuento," or first bank, which fails a few years later, causing economic crisis	—Exposition of artistic and industrial products —Newspaper *El Condor* publishes, in every edition, novel of a Colombian author
1843	New constitution approved of, Centralist Court	Census of the republic: 1,812,600	
1845	—Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera elected president of the republic —Major state reforms begin	—Steam navigation on Magdalena River —National road plan to connect capital with Venezuela and Ecuador —Savings bank established in Bogotá	Lino de Pombo publishes his *Recopilación Granadina de Legislación Nacional*
1846	Treaty, Mallarino-Bidlack, between United States and Colombia concerning Panama	Horse-drawn coach: first public transportation system in the capital	—First "normal school" established —Architect Thomas Reed begins construction of Capitolio Nacional—"Congress Building"

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1847	Democratic artisan and progressive workers societies formed	—General budget directorate established —Concession signed to build Panama railroad	—Philharmonic Society created in Bogotá —Statue of Bolívar placed in Central Plaza, Bogotá
1848	Two political parties defined: Liberal and Conservative	—Free trade approved —Freedom of agriculture and commercialization of tobacco begins —Concession to North Americans for construction of Panama Railway	—Joaquín Acosta publishes *Compendio histórico del descubrimiento y colonización de la Nueva Granada en el siglo XVI* —Newspapers using "lithograph" published in New Granada
1849	José Hilario López is president	—Death penalty abolished —Manizales is founded	
1850		Liberal reforms	—Chorographic Commission, "Agustín Codazzi" established —Education restrictions ended, university titles abolished
1851	Civil war	—Census: 2,240,054 —Introduction of English livestock "Durham" and "Hereford" —Slavery eliminated —Freedom of press, trial by jury —First roadway built with McAdam's technique	

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
1853	—José María Obando is president —New moderate constitution		
1854	—José María Melo stages coup —Civil war, Melo falls, and José de Obaldía governs		
1855	—Manuel María Mallarino president —Panama becomes federal state	Panama Railway begins operations	
1856	—Watermelon Riot at Panama; U.S. Marines occupy Colón —Antioquia becomes state after approval of their own constitution	—Colombia third-largest producer of gold in the world —Textile factory (cotton) built at Bogotá	Agustín Codazzi releases his *Geografía física y política de la Nueva Granada*
1857	—Mariano Ospina Rodríguez is president —States created: Santander, Cauca, Boyacá, Bolívar, and Magdalena	Tobacco produced in Ambalema under English control	
1858	—New federal constitution —Republic of New Granada becomes "Confederación Granadina"		—*Manuela* by Eugenio Díaz published in segments in the new literary journal *El Mosaico* —Edition published in France of José María Restrepo's *Historia de la Revolución de la República de Colombia*

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1859	Civil war until 1862	—Bank "Botero, Arango e Hijos" created; lasts until 1898 —Modern mail system created	
1860	Various states separate	—Steam engines used to clean cotton —Exportation of quinine and indigo	—Ezequiel Uricoechea publishes *Elementos de Mineralogía* —José María Vergara y Vergara publishes *Lira Granadina*
1861	—Dictatorship of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera —Bogotá set up as federal district —Provisional pact of union gives sovereignty to the states	Disentailment from mortmain decree signed	—National Library moved to disentailed convents —José María Samper publishes his *Ensayo sobre las Revoluciones Políticas*
1863	—New federalist constitution —Confederación Granadina becomes United States of Colombia —Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera elected president	—City of Pereira founded —Tobacco production and exportation grows	
1864	Manuel Murillo Toro elected president	—Banks established —First telegraph message —Infrastructure development: underwater cable and roads	—*Diario Oficial* founded; government publication —Founding of *Gaceta Médica de Colombia* —Medical school founded

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1865		Bank of London, Mexico, and South America created	Felipe Pérez publishes his *Geografía General de los Estados Unidos de Colombia*
1866	Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera elected president		
1867	Coup against Mosquera; Manuel María de los Santos Acosta becomes president	Contract written for rail line from Barranquilla to Sabanilla	—Jorge Isaacs publishes *María* —Founding of National University of Colombia in Bogotá
1868	Santos Gutiérrez is president		National Library and National Museum updated
1870	Eustorgio Salgar is president	Banco de Bogotá founded	Education reform, favoring the sciences
1871	Government takes over public education	—Bank of Antioquia created —Colombian Society of Farmers created	University of Antioquia founded
1872	Manuel Murillo Toro is president for the second time		—Decree that the national holiday will be celebrated every July 20 —Rufino Cuervo publishes his *Apuntaciones sobre el lenguaje Bogotano* —Colombian Academy of Language founded

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1874	Santiago Pérez is president	—Colombian Insurance Company founded —Bank of Colombia founded —Antioquia Railroad contracted for construction	School of Mines founded in Medellín
1876	—Aquileo Parra is president —National civil war		
1877	Civil war ends, government triumphs	Chaves Chocolate Company founded	Candelario Obeso publishes his *Cantos Populares de mi Tierra*
1878	Julián Trujillo is president	—Digging begins for interoceanic canal at Panama —Contract written for construction of railway from Buenaventura to Cali	Carlos Martínez publishes *Repertorio colombiano*
1880	Rafael Núñez is president	National Bank established with protectionist customs policies	National Institute of Agriculture founded
1881		Work begins on railway lines from La Dorada to Ambalema, Girardot to Facatativá, Puerto Wilches to Bucaramanga, and Cúcuta to Puerto Santander	
1882	José Eusebio Otálora is president	Construction begins on railway line from Bogotá to Facatativá and from Santa Marta to Fundación	—Institute of Bellas Artes established in Bogotá —National anthem composed

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1883		—Banco de Crédito Hipotecario established —Banco Unión established in Cartagena	
1884	Núñez is president for second time	Street trolley company established by North Americans in Bogotá	First telephone line in the country, from Bogotá to Chapinero
1885	Civil war; radical Liberals defeated by alliance between Conservatives and moderate Liberals		
1886	—New centralist constitution —Eliseo Payán is president; in 1887 Núñez returns as president —New name for country: Republic of Colombia	Paper money goes into circulation	Rufino José Cuervo publishes his *Diccionario de Construcción y Régimen de la Lengua Castellana*
1888	—Carlos Holguín is president —Strong anti-press laws passed	—Panama Canal Company goes bankrupt —National police founded —Jockey Club founded	
1891	Conservative Party divides between "Históricos" and "Nacionalistas"	—Glass company founded in Bogotá —Bavaria beer company founded in Bogotá	—Society of Medicine and Natural Sciences founded —Julio Garavito begins his astronomical research

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1892	Miguel Antonio Caro is president	—Treaty of friendship, commerce, and navigation with Germany and Italy —Law concerning railroads promulgated	—Education reform —Teatro Colón reinaugurated in Bogotá
1894		—Banco Nacional fails —Railway opens, Cartagena to Calamar	José Asunción Silva publishes *Nocturno II*
1895	National civil war: government wins	Colombia becomes coffee export nation	
1898	Manuel Antonio Sanclemente is president		
1899	Thousand Day War begins	—Coffee exports expand —United Fruit Company established in Colombia —First automobile brought to Medellín	Guillermo Valencia publishes *Anarkos*
1900	Coup against Sanclemente; José Manuel Marroquín becomes president		—Electric energy service begins in Bogotá —José María Vargas Vila publishes *Ibis*
1902	In Panama, treaty ending the Thousand Day War signed	—In Medellín, Antioquian Textile Company created —United States buys the shares of the failed French canal company	Colombian Academy of History established
1903	Panama separates from Colombia with U.S. backing	Gold standard established for currency	Carlos Cuervo Márquez publishes *Apuntaciones sobre los orígenes del pueblo Chibcha*

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1904	Rafael Reyes is president; closes Congress	—In Medellín, soft drink company Posada y Tobon created, Postobon —Expansion of coffee production in Antioquia —Textile company Fabricato developed in Medellín	—First automobile in Bogotá —Exposition of the painting of Andrés de Santamaría —San José hospital under construction —Geographic Society of Colombia founded
1905	President replaces Congress with National Assembly	—Currency stabilizes —Census: 4,122,000 —"Barco y Mares" granted concession to search for oil	
1907	Military school founded and national army reorganized	—Subsidies in place for exportation of coffee, rubber, tobacco, and cotton —Coltejer established (textiles) in Medellín	First film "shorts" produced
1909	Rafael Reyes resigns presidency; replaced by Ramón González Valencia	—Production of bananas, sugar, and cotton increases —Electric Company of Barranquilla opens	La Academia de Música of Bogotá becomes National Conservatory
1910	—Carlos E. Restrepo is president —Boycott in Bogotá against U.S.-owned streetcar company —Strike, dock workers and railway workers —Reform to 1886 constitution	First Congress of Agriculturalists	—Celebration of one hundred years of independence
1911	—Army reform, with help from Chilean military mission	—Coffee exports grow significantly —First wireless telegraph	*El Tiempo* founded in Bogotá

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
	—Tensions between Peru and Colombia over Amazon rubber production		
1912	Fighting breaks out with Peruvian soldiers in rubber-producing zone, Amazon	—Census: 5,972,604 —Important industrial development at Barranquilla —Radio-telegraphic station at Cartagena	*El Colombiano* founded in Medellín
1914	—José Vícente Concha is president —Urrutia-Thomson Treaty; Colombia will recognize Panama in exchange for twenty-five-million-dollar indemnity	—In Bogotá Electrical Energy and Obregón Textile companies created —Steamship navigation on Sinú and Atrato rivers	Creation of Instituto de Medicina Legal
1916	—Indigenous rebellion under direction of Quintín Lame —Colombia fails to approve Urrutia-Thomson Treaty due to modifications made by U.S. Congress	—Tropical Oil Company of Delaware begins operations —Empresa de Cementos Samper created in Bogotá —Public bus service begins in Barranquilla	Magazine *Cromos* appears
1918	—Marco Fidel Suárez is president —First oil workers' union —Strike, workers at Barranquilla and Cartagena ports	—Súarez makes his *Respice Polum* speech —Census: 5,855,077 —Dock at Buenaventura built	

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
1919	—Artisans on strike, Bogotá —National air force created	—First Socialist Party Congress —SCADTA created (Sociedad Colombo Alemana de Transportes Aéreos)	
1921	—President Suárez resigns; replaced by Jorge Holguín —U.S. Senate ratifies Urrutia-Thomson and sends twenty-five million dollars in indemnification payment	Coffee exports continue to grow	José Eustacio Rivera publishes *Tierra de Promisión*
1922	Pedro Nel Ospina is president	"Debt prosperity" due to amount of loans sent to Colombia from United States	Miguel Triana publishes *La Civilización Chibcha*
1923	Kemmerer Mission comes to Colombia from United States to help organize national finances	Bank of the Republic established along with superintendence of banks	—Rockefeller Foundation mission helps cure yellow fever outbreak in Bucaramanga —First translations of Freud arrive in Colombia
1924	—Oil worker strike in Barrancabermeja —Swiss military mission helps reorganize national army	German Pedagogy Mission arrives	—José Eustacio Rivera publishes *La Vorágine* —Colombian film appears, *Aura o las Violetas*
1926	—Miguel Abadía-Méndez is president —Socialist Party founded	Pedagogic Institute founded in Bogotá	Journal *Universidad* created, directed by Germán Arciniegas

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1928	—Strike and massacre of banana workers in Ciénaga —Nicaragua recognizes Colombia's rights to islands of San Andrés and Providencia	Stock market created at Bogotá	Agricultural experimentation station developed in Palmira
1930	—Enrique Olaya-Herrera is president —Communist Party of Colombia founded —First flare-ups of bipartisan violence	Worldwide economic crisis felt in Colombia	—First radio station created in Medellín —The Pontificia Universidad Javeriana re-established in Bogotá
1932	—Jorge Eliécer Gaitán creates UNIR (Unión Nacional Izquierdista Revolucionaria) —War with Peru	—Three-year public works plan with emphasis on highway construction —Banco Central Hipotecario founded	—Porfirio Barba Jacob publishes *Canciones y Elegías* —Eduardo Zalamea publishes *Cuatro años a bordo de mi mismo*
1934	—Alfonso López-Pumarejo is president —Political violence in Boyacá and Santander grows	Eight-hour work day established together with other worker rights	—Luis López de Mesa publishes *De cómo se ha formado la Nación Colombiana* —Colombian Association of Architects created
1935	First Congress of *campesino* workers leads to creation of Workers' Union Confederation of Colombia	Diplomatic relations with Soviet Union	National University unifies at single campus, with institutional autonomy

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1936	Reform of constitution of 1886—giving more rights to citizens	—National identity card inaugurated —Agrarian reform (Law 200) —Private property might be limited if social need warrants	—National Symphony Orchestra created —*El Siglo* (newspaper) published —Médical Federación created
1938	Eduardo Santos is president	—Census: 8,697,041 —Law protecting expectant mothers	Inauguration of the new building housing the National Library
1939	—Jorge Eliécer Gaitán named minister of education —Campesinos demonstrate in Viotá (Cundinamarca)	Modernization projects carried out at Port of Buenaventura	—Group of poets known as “Piedra y Cielo” appears —*Revista de Indias* created
1940	Spanish intellectuals fleeing the Spanish civil war arrive in Colombia	—IFI created—Instituto de Formento Industrial, to push the industrial sector forward —SCADTA’s license revoked—WW II —Interamerican agreement regulates exportation of coffee to United States	—National radio network established —First “Salón Nacional de Artistas”
1942	Alfonso López Pumarejo is president for second time	Colombia harmed by WW II–induced economic crisis	

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1945	—President resigns; replaced by Alberto Lleras Camargo —Strikes in the Magdalena River Valley severely put down —Constitutional reform	—Grancolombian Mercantile Fleet established to facilitate coffee exports —National Federation of Businessmen established —90 percent of national exports dependent on coffee	"Circle" of Colombian journalists created at Bogotá
1946	—Mariano Ospina Pérez is president —Union of Colombian Workers (UTC) established —Strikes throughout nation —Political violence grows throughout nation	—Colombian Institute of Social Security created —Importation of agricultural machinery	Colombia is site of Fifth Central American and Caribbean Games
1948	—Jorge Eliécer Gaitán killed in Bogotá—riots break out —Ninth Panamerican Conference meets in Bogotá; establishes nonintervention in internal events	—Ecopetrol (state-run oil company) established —Iron works plant established at Paz del Rio, Boyacá	—Universidad Industrial de Santander (Bucaramanga) established —Alejandro Obregón paints *Los muertos del 9 de Abril* —National Museum moves to old Panóptico—jail —Modern Art Exposition

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
1949	—Ospina closes Congress —Political stability deteriorates; bipartisan conflict grows	—Coffee price rises in international market —National industry consolidates —Visit from Economic Mission of the Banco Internacional de Reconstrucción y Fomento	—University of Los Andes created —Contract drawn up with Le Corbusier to build "Pilot Plan" for Bogotá
1950	—Laureano Gómez is president —Liberal guerillas of eastern plains form —Colombia participates in Korean War	—Confederation of Colombian Workers (CTC) divides between Liberals and Communists —Political parties divide between moderates and radicals —Measures developed to stabilize currency	—*El País* founded —La Cumbia spreads internationally —Rockefeller mission helps with agricultural/animal husbandry research in Colombia
1951	—L. Gómez ill; Roberto Urdaneta rules —Liberal Party abstains from political participation	—Census: 11,548,172 —Work code approved —Foreign capital allowed in without restrictions	University La Gran Colombia founded
1952	One hundred thousand dead as result of violence; another five hundred thousand injured	—Oil pipeline operates from Puerto Salgar to Bogotá —Plan to build hydroelectric plants developed	—Eduardo Caballero Calderón publishes *El Cristo de Espaldas* —Universidad de América founded
1953	Military coup: Lt. Gen. Gustavo Rojas Pinilla takes power	—Banco Cafetero is created —70 percent increase in military budget	Laureano Gómez publishes his study of Mussolini, Hitler, Gandhi, and Stalin, *El Cuadrilátero*

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1954	—Rojas Pinilla "elected" president by National Constitutional Assembly —Protesting students killed by army in Bogotá	—Banco Popular created —Economic growth thanks to international price of coffee —Bogotá becomes "Distrito Especial"	—First television broadcast —Eduardo Caballero Calderón publishes *Siervo sin Tierra* —Library "Pública Piloto" opens in Medellín
1956	—Rojas creates "Third Force" as alternative to Liberal and Conservative Parties —Pacto de Benidorm (Spain); Alberto Lleras and Laureano Gómez plan to fight dictatorship —Structure of "Frente Nacional" established by Alfonso López Pumarejo	—Minimum wage established —CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference) established at Bogotá —Dynamite explosion on center of Cali—many (thousands) killed	Colombians participate in Olympics at Melbourne
1957	—Rojas overthrown via national civic strike; military junta rules nation —Liberals and Conservatives agree to coalition government —Treaty of Sitges (Spain) establishes National Front procedure	SENA ("National Learning Service") established	—Tenth Salón Nacional de Artistas: Fernando Botero wins prize —National school of journalists established —Bogotá establishes Luis Ángel Arango Library, backed by Banco de la República

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
1958	—Alberto Lleras Camargo is first president of the National Front —Amnesty law for those involved in armed rebellion	International Organization of Coffee created	Gabriel García Márquez publishes, in journal *Mito, El coronel no tiene quién le escriba* (*No One Writes to the Colonel*)
1960	—ANAPO formed by Rojas Pinilla (National Popular Alliance) —MOEC forms (rural student worker movement)	—Colonization of Carare (Santander) pushed by Agrarian Savings Bank —Government pushes metal industry forward	Álvaro Mutis publishes *Diario del Lecumberri*
1961	—Álvaro Gómez (in Congress) denounces existence of "Independent Republics" controlled by guerilla organizations and asks government to act —Diplomatic relations with Cuba cut —President John F. Kennedy visits Bogotá	—National planning organization develops as government tool —Colombia joins ALAC—Association of Latin American Free Trade —INCORA established, Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform —Colombia benefits from Alliance for Progress	García Márquez wins prize for his novel *La mala hora* (*In Evil Hour*)
1962	—Guillermo León Valencia is second president of the National Front —Repressive measures taken against rural social conflict	Severe devaluation of peso	—Alejandro Obregón wins first prize in the Salón Nacional de Artistas —*La Violencia en Colombia* published by Germán Guzmán, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1964	—ELN (Army of National Liberation) carries out its first acts —FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) born in Tolima	—Census: 17,484,508 —CSTC created; Syndicate of Colombian Workers —Crisis in textile industry —French president Charles de Gaulle visits Colombia	Manuel Zapata Olivella publishes *En Chimá nace un Santo*
1966	—Carlos Lleras Restrepo is third president of National Front —Father Camilo Torres, who joined ELN in 1965, dies in combat with Colombian army	—Bogotá Declaration, concerning commercial integration of Andean countries —President Lleras rejects IMF reform suggestions	Theater group "La Candelaria" born
1967	EPL is born (National Popular Army of Liberation) —Student demonstrations, Bogotá —Massacre of sixteen indigenous persons at La Rubiela	—Control over foreign currency established —PROEXPO established to promote Colombian exports	—García Márquez publishes *Cien años de soledad* (*One Hundred Years of Solitude*) —Álvaro Cepeda Samudio publishes *La Casa Grande* —Colombian cyclists have international success —Álvaro Mejía wins San Silvestre Marathon in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1968	—Constitutional reform —Pope Paul VI visits Colombia	Colombian Family Welfare Institute begins operations	Colcultura, Colciencias, and Coldeportes established to support national culture, academic/scientific research, and sports
1970	—Misael Pastrana is fourth president of National Front —ANAPO accuses government of electoral fraud		
1972	Plan created to fight production, sale, and consumption of illegal narcotics	Agrarian reform ends	First Olympic medal for a Colombian
1973	—New concordat signed with Vatican —M-19 insurgency group forms, separates from ANAPO	Census: 20,785,235	Álvaro Mutis publishes *La Mansión de Araucaima*
1974	Alfonso López Michelsen, president	Economic emergency declared to control inflation	Journal *Alternativa* founded with leftist democratic character
1975	—National civil strike —Diplomatic relations with Cuba re-established	—Eighteen-year-olds declared legal citizens —Economic program calls for greater social spending and support of rural folk —Coffee production grows	—García Márquez publishes *El Otoño del Patriarca* (*The Autumn of the Patriarch*) —Discovery in Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta: the ruins of Buritaca 200 (Ciudad Perdida)
1977	National civil strike		

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1978	—Julio César Turbay is president —Estatuto Jurídico imposed for the security of the state, which turns into mechanism of repression for political opposition		Ethnic education for indigenous peoples becomes the policy of the Ministry of Education
1982	—Belisario Betancur is president —Right-wing organizations created —Peace Commission created —Congress approves Amnesty Law	—Colombia decides not to support Argentina in Malvinas War —Colombia joins "non-aligned" nations —President Ronald Reagan visits Colombia —Petroleum economy takes off —Cerrejón coal mine exports to Spain —Bogotá-Medellín highway completed	—García Márquez wins Nobel Prize in Literature —Caro y Cuervo Institute publishes *Atlas Lingüístico de Colombia* —Arhuacos expel from Sierra Nevada the Capuchin missionaries
1984	—National civil strike —Peace Commission and the FARC sign an agreement at La Uribe —Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla killed by narco-traffickers —Carlos Toledo Plata of M-19 killed —Peace treaty signed with M-19, EPL, and others	—Capital flight creates crisis —Sales tax implemented —Unión Patriótica (UP) born as result of peace accords with the FARC	—Colombia at Olympic games in Los Angeles —First Bogotá film festival —UNESCO declares Cartagena "Patrimony of Humanity"

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1985	—First four drug traffickers extradited to United States —M-19 attacks Palace of Justice in Bogotá	—Census: 27,837,932 —Significant increase in oil production —Avalanche of Nevado del Ruíz, burying town of Armero; 20,000 killed —Gold discovered on Brazilian border	First heart transplant in the country
1986	—Virgilio Barco is president —Popular election of mayors approved	—Pope John Paul II visits Colombia —Pacific coast militarized to prevent importation of arms to insurgent forces	—100 years of Constitution celebrated —Casa de Poesia (poetry center) José Asunción Silva opens in Bogotá
1987	—Assassination of presidential candidate Jaime Pardo Leal of the UP —Insurgency forces unite as Simón Bolívar coordinated front in La Uribe —Peace talks between government and Bolívar coordinate	Growth in exports other than coffee	Metropolitan Theater of Medellín opens
1988	—First popular election of mayors —Government recognizes guerilla as valid political actor —First massacre by paramilitary forces in Magdalena midpoint valley	Inflation reaches 30 percent	Manuel Mejía Vallejo publishes *La Casa de los Dos Palmas*

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1989	—M-19 accepts goverment peace plan —Extradition accepted as government policy —Pablo Escobar takes down Avianca jet —Paramilitary forces declared illegal —Leftist leader José Antequera killed —Bomb destroys DAS headquarters (Administrative Department of Security); another bomb destroys offices of *El Espectador* in Bogotá —Presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán killed	—United States commits sixty-five million dollars to fight against drugs in Colombia —Inflation at 26 percent —Silent march in Bogotá, organized by student movement	—National Archive opens —Soccer team "Atlético Nacional" wins Copa Libertadores de América
1990	—César Gaviria is president —Students push for "constitutional assembly" —Leftist presidential candidate Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa killed —Carlos Pizarro, peace broker for M-19, killed —Constitutional assembly approved by election	—American Airlines arrives in Colombia —Neoliberal reforms begin in Colombia —Inflation at 30 percent	—National system of science and technology created —Colombia participates in World Cup, Italy

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1991	—Constitutional assembly writes new constitution; approved July 4 —Peace talks in Caracas between government and guerilla coordinate	Coffee and oil no longer leading Colombian exports	Fourth Book Fair held at Bogotá
1992	—Peace talks in Caracas and Tlaxcala, Mexico, between the government and FARC —Constitutional court begins deliberations	—Electricity rationing begins —Pablo Escobar escapes from prison	—Ximena Restrepo wins a bronze medal at the Barcelona Olympic Games —Approval of Law 30; obliges the nation to transfer money to universities according to inflation
1993	—Constitutional Reform: Creates the Special Industrial and Port District of Barranquilla	—Census: 33,109,839 —Pablo Escobar dies in a confrontation with the police —The Ministry of Foreign Trade is created	—Colombia qualifies for the World Cup after beating Argentina 5-0 —The film *La Estrategia del Caracol* wins best film at the Valladolid Film Festival —The novel *Leopard in the Sun* by Laura Restrepo is published —The song “¡Pilas!” is released by Aterciopelados

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
1994	—Ernesto Samper Pizano elected president —Samper campaign accepts $6m in illegal money from *narcotraficantes*	—First cell phone arrives in Colombia —Assassination of Andrés Escobar, soccer player, in Medellín	—Colombia participates in the World Cup, USA —The novel *The Virgin of the Sicarios* by Fernando Vallejo is published
1995	—The conservative leader Álvaro Gómez Hurtado is assassinated —The brothers Miguel and Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela, leaders of the Cali cartel, are captured —Constitutional reform: Establishes that the military and national police be tried by court-martial or military courts	—Colombia is decertified by the United States —Free Trade Agreement between Colombia and Mexico —The Medellín Metro is inaugurated —Free Trade Agreement between Colombia and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM)	—The song "My Generation of Polygamy" is released —The song "El Pescador" by José Barros and Toto La Momposina is released
1996	—Constitutional Reform: Creation of Departmental Assemblies —President Samper is acquitted by Congress	—Peasant marches in Putumayo, Caquetá, and Guaviare concerning fumigation programs	
1997	—Demilitarization of 14,000 square kilometers in Caquetá, to free soldiers captured by FARC	—Internal displacement increases due to violence —The number of drug trafficking laboratories increases —The Colombian GDP contracts by 4.2 percent	—Colombia qualifies for the World Cup —The Ministry of Culture is created

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
	—Legislation approved allowing for the extradition of Colombian citizens		
1998	—Andrés Pastrana Arango elected president —FARC takes over the city of Mitú, capital of Vaupés —A 42,000 square kilometer demilitarized zone is created to advance peace talks between FARC and the government	—The private television channels Caracol and RCN are established	—Colombia participates in the World Cup in France —The film *La Vendedora de Rosas* by Víctor Gaviria nominated for the Palme d'Or at Cannes
1999	—Assassination of three Indigenous leaders (USA) after having been kidnapped by FARC —Caquetania Agreement is reached between FARC and President Pastrana	—Earthquake in the Coffee Region —Plan Colombia begins —Journalist and comedian Jaime Garzón murdered in Bogotá —Economic crisis: GDP contracts by more than 4 percent Unemployment rate, 20 percent	—The *telenovela* "Yo Soy Betty la Fea" is broadcasted —Juan Pablo Montoya wins the CART World Championship Series
2000	—The AUC assassinates 12 people in the Macayepo Massacre	—Bogotá transportation system, Transmilenio, is inaugurated	—María Isabel Urrutia wins the gold medal in weightlifting at the Sydney Olympics

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
	—Constitutional Reform: Establishes that Bogotá is the capital of the republic, of the department of Cundinamarca, and is organized as the Capital District		—Barber Schroeder adapts the novel *The Virgin of the Sicarios* to film —Juan Pablo Montoya wins the Indianapolis 500
2001	—Release of 201 policemen captured by FARC in exchange for eleven guerillas held by the government —Constitutional Reform: Accepts the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court in accordance with the Rome Statute —First meeting of what would become the Ralito Pact	FTA between Colombia and Cuba	—Vanessa Mendoza wins as first Black beauty queen of the nation —The song "Campesino Embejucao" by Oscar Humberto Gómez is released —The Colombian team wins the Copa América
2002	—Álvaro Uribe Vélez elected president —FARC kidnap presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt and her vice-presidential candidate —Rocket attack against the Palacio de Nariño on inauguration day —Uribe's Plan Patriota begins	—Law 789: Labor reform	—Santiago Botero wins cycling world championship in Belgium

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
	—FARC kidnap the former governor of Antioquia Aníbal Gaviria and the former minister Gilberto Echeverry Mejía —Constitutional Reform: Children of Colombians born abroad have the right to Colombian nationality —Constitutional Reform: four-year terms for governors, deputies, mayors, and councilors		
2003	—FARC attacks El Nogal club —Negotitation between the government and the AUC begins —Agreement between the government and the AUC in Santa Fe de Ralito —Legislative Act 2: Anti-Terrorism Statute	—Decree 1760: National Hydrocarbons Agency is created —Ecopetrol shares are sold to private investors	Architect Rogelio Salmona dies Once Caldas wins the Copa Libertadores
2004	—Simón Trinidad, FARC chief of finances, captured in Ecuador —Leaders of the AUC appear before Congress	—Medellín Metrocable is inaugurated	

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
	—Constitutional reform: Presidents may be elected for a second term —Carlos Castaño is assassinated —FARC guerilla, Rodrigo Granda, captured in Venezuela		
2005	—Constitutional Reform: Guarantees the access of all Colombians to the pension system and a minimum wage —Law 975: Justice and Peace or Transitional Justice is issued for the AUC —The Polo Democrático Alternativo Party is founded —The Union for the People Party, better known as the U Party, is founded	—Census: 41,468,384 —The economic and trade agreement between the Andean Community and Mercosur enters into force	Colombia wins the South American U-20 soccer championship
2006	—Álvaro Uribe Vélez elected for a second term as president —FARC attack the Nueva Granada Military University with a car bomb	"Parapolitics Scandal" breaks out	—UNESCO declares the Carnival of Barranquilla as Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity — Fernando Vallejo renounces Colombian nationality

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
	—The Elmer Cárdenas Bloc of the AUC demobilizes, concluding the demobilization of the AUC		
2007	Constitutional Reform: Establishes the number of councillors for the city of Bogotá	Hay Festival is inaugurated in Cartagena	
2008	—Attack by the army and the air force in Ecuador against FARC second-in-command, Raúl Reyes —Diplomatic crisis: Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela —Head of the FARC, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, dies of natural causes — Extradition of paramilitary leaders to the United States	—One million citizens march against FARC —Ingrid Betancourt, three U.S. contractors, and eleven soldiers captured by FARC are rescued in a military operation	—The book *El País de la Canela* by William Ospina is published —Women's U-17 soccer team wins the South American championship —Diego Salazar wins a silver medal in weightlifting at the Olympic Games —Jackeline Rentería wins a bronze medal in wrestling at the Olympic Games
2009	—The FARC assassinate seventeen Awá indigenous people —The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications (MINTIC) is created	—Ecopetrol buys shares of the Cartagena Refinery —Scandal over infiltration and illegal surveillance by the DAS	—UNESCO declares the "Carnaval de Blancos y Negros" as Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity —Death of the *vallenato* composer Rafael Escalona

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
		—Military agreement between Colombia and the US for the American use of seven military bases —FTA between Colombia and El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras —FTA between Colombia and Chile	
2010	—Juan Manuel Santos elected president —Víctor Julio Suárez Rojas, alias Mono Jojoy, head of FARC's military wing, is killed by the Armed Forces.		The Bicentennial of Independence is celebrated
2011	—Constitutional Reform: system of royalties and compensation is established for the exploitation of non-renewable resources —Leader of the FARC, Guillermo León Sáenz Vargas, alias Alfonso Cano, is killed by the Armed Forces.	FTA between Colombia and the states of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and Canada	—The book *The Sound of Things Falling* by Juan Gabriel Vásquez is published —The U-20 Soccer World Cup is held in Colombia —Neurologist Salomon Hakim dies —Singer-songwriter Joe Arroyo dies
2012	—Legislative Acts 01: Approval of the Transitional Justice —Secret negotiations between the government and FARC begin in Havana, Cuba	FTA between Colombia and the United States is approved and enters into force	—Colombia wins eight medals at the London Olympic Games

Year	Politics	Society and Economy	Culture and Science
		—The Hague ratifies Colombia's possession of San Andrés, Providencia, and the Keys, but reduces its territorial waters —FTA between Colombia and Venezuela	
2013	The Democratic Center Party is founded	—Madre Laura Montoya, the first Colombian saint, is canonized —*Campesinos* demonstrate against free trade agreements —National strike of coffee growers	—Writer Álvaro Mutis dies —The cyclist Nairo Quintana wins second place at the Tour de France
2014	Juan Manuel Santos elected for a second term as president	FTA between Colombia and the European Union	—The writer and Nobel Prize winner Gabriel García Márquez dies —Nairo Quintana wins the Giro d'Italia —Colombia participates in the World Cup in Brazil, and reaches the quarterfinals —The book *La Oculta* by Héctor Abad Faciolince is published
2015	—Constitutional Reform: presidential re-election is struck down	—First Zika virus outbreak	—James Rodríguez wins Puskas award —Paulina Vega wins Miss Universe

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
	—Constitutional Reform: training in International Humanitarian Law required for military and police	—European Union eliminates the Schengen Visa for Colombians —Unemployment rate drops to 7.9 percent	—The film *La Tierra y la Sombra* by César Augusto Acevedo wins award at Cannes —Juan Pablo Montoya wins the Indianapolis 500
2016	—Rural areas are established for the settlement of FARC combatants —The Peace Agreement is signed between FARC and the government in Cartagena	—Constitutional Court approves equal marriage for same-sex couples —Plebiscite for the ratification of the Peace Accords, the "No" wins with 50.21 percent of the votes. —Demonstrations in favor of the Peace Agreement —FTA between Colombia and Costa Rica —FTA between Colombia and South Korea	—The film *El Abrazo de la Serpiente*, nominated for Best International Film at the 88th Academy Awards —The cyclist Nairo Quintana wins the Tour of Spain —Fernando Gaviria wins the omnium in the Track Cycling World Championship —Atlético Nacional wins the Copa Libertadores —Colombia wins eight Olympic medals, three gold, at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro —President Juan Manuel Santos wins the Nobel Peace Prize

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
2017	—The political party representing the FARC is approved —FARC begins disarming —Bilateral ceasefire between the Government and the ELN	—Suspension of the use of glyphosate —Twenty-four homicides for every 100,000 inhabitants —Health coverage reaches 97.6 percent —Odebrecht money inflow scandal for presidential campaigns —Pope Francis visits Colombia —Taxi drivers strike over ridesharing platforms	Eíder Arévalo wins the gold medal at the World Athletics Championships in London
2018	—Iván Duque Márquez elected president —Constitutional Reform: Tumaco designated as Special District	—Census: 48,258,494 —University student and teacher protests —National strike of teachers —Colombia joins the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) —Colombia renounces its participation in UNASUR	—Colombia participates in the World Cup in Russia, reaches the round of sixteen —Sierra de Chiribiquete National Natural Park designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site
2019	—Constitutional Reform: Barrancabermeja declared a Special District	—FTA between Colombia and the United Kingdom	—Cyclist Egan Bernal wins the Tour de France

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
	—Constitutional Reform: Prohibition of political pardons for drug trafficking crimes —The "Dissidents of the FARC" is created by Iván Márquez and Jesús Santrich	—Demonstrations against the economic policies of President Duque	—Francia Márquez wins the Goldman environmental prize —Juan Sebastián Cabal and Robert Farah win Wimbledon and the U.S. Open —Colciencias becomes the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation
2020	General quarantine due to increases in COVID-19 cases	—State of Emergency decreed as a result of COVID-19 —Drop in international oil prices —The National Museum of Memory is created —FTA between Colombia and Israel —Massacres of peasants and social leaders	
2021	—Constitutional Reform: Medellín is designated as a Special District —Political Party of the FARC changes its name to "Comunes" —Jesús Sanntrich, leader of the FARC Dissidents, dies in Venezuela	—First vaccines against COVID-19 arrive in Colombia. —Assassinations of ex-combatants of the FARC —National strike against tax reform —State repression of protesters leaves at least fifty dead	—The film *El Olvido que Seremos*, wins the Goya award for best Ibero-American film —Egan Bernal wins the Giro d'Italia

Year	*Politics*	*Society and Economy*	*Culture and Science*
		—Colombian peso becomes one of the most devalued currencies in the world	
2022	—Gustavo Petro elected president —Beginning of dialogue between the government and the ELN	—Tributary reform —Final report of the JEP is issued —Border between Colombia and Venezuela is opened —Peso falls dramatically against the dollar	Colombia hosts Women's Copa America

Selected Bibliography

*Bibliography of English language titles. Some significant documents are included in a section titled "Documents."

Abad Faciolince, Héctor. *The Farm*. New York: Archipelago, 2018.

_____. *Oblivion: A Memoir*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2012.

Abel, Christopher. "External Philanthropy and Domestic Change in Colombian Healthcare: The Role of the Rockefeller Foundation, ca. 1920–1950." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 75 (1995): 339–76.

Angelo, Paul J. *From Peril to Partnership: U.S. Security Assistance and the Bid to Stabilize Colombia and Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023.

Appelbaum, Nancy. *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846–1948*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Arana, Marie. *Bolívar: American Liberator*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 2013.

Asher, Kiran. *Black and Green: Afro-Colombians, Development, and Nature in the Pacific Lowlands*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.

Bergquist, Charles, Ricardo Peñaranda y Gonzalo Sánchez. *Violence in Colombia, 1990–2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace*. Wilmington: SR Books, 2001.

Berry R., Albert. The development of the agricultural sector of Colombia into the 1960s. Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2017.

Birbragher-Rozencwaig, Francine. *Essays on 20th Century Latin American Art*. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Braun, Herbert. *Our Guerrillas, Our Sidewalks: A Journey into the Violence of Colombia*. 2ª ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003.

_____. *The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Bushnell, David. *The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Clancy, Tom. *Clear and Present Danger*. New York: G.P. Putnam´s Sons, 1989.

Davis, Wade. *Magdalena: River of Dreams: A Story of Colombia*. New York: Knopf, 2020.

Del Castillo, Lina. *Crafting a Republic for the World: Scientific, Geographic, and Historiographic Inventions of Colombia*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018.

Dudley, Steven. *Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Dueñas-Vargas, Guiomar. *Of Love and Other Passions: Elites, Politics, and Family in Bogotá, Colombia, 1778–1870*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015.

Earle, Rebecca. *The Return of the Native: Indians and Myth-Making in Spanish America, 1810–1930*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Erlick, June C. *A Gringa in Bogotá: Living Colombia's Invisible War*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010.

_____. *Natural Disasters in Latin America and the Caribbean: Coping with Calamity*. New York: Routledge, 2021.

_____. *Telenovelas in Pan-Latino Context*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Fattal, Alexander. *Guerilla Marketing: Counterinsurgency and Capitalism in Colombia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Fergusson Talero, Leopoldo, Carlos Molina, James A. Robinson y Juan Fernando Vargas D. *The Long Shadow of the Past: Political Economy of Regional Inequality in Colombia*. Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes. Facultad de Economía, 2017.

Friedemann, Nina de. *African Saga: Cultural Heritage and Contributions to Colombia*. Santa Fe: Gaon Books, 2008.

Galeano, Eduardo. *El fútbol a sol y sombra*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1995.

García Márquez, Gabriel. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006.

_____. *The General in His Labyrinth*. New York: Random House, 1990.

Gardeazábal Bravo, Carlos and Kevin G. Guerrieri. *Human Rights in Colombian Literature and Cultural Production: Embodied Enactments*. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Gill, Lesley. *A Century of Violence in a Red City: Popular Struggle, Counterinsurgency and Human Rights in Colombia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Guillermoprieto, Alma. *Looking for History: Dispatches from Latin America*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001.

Gutiérrez Sanín Francisco. *Clientelistic Warfare: Paramilitaries and the States in Colombia, 1982–2007*. Oxford: International Academic Publisher, 2019.

Guzmán, Germán, Orlando Fals Borda y Eduardo Umaña Luna. *La violencia en Colombia: estudio de un proceso social*. Bogotá: Tercer Mundo Editores, 1962.

Helg, Aline. *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770–1835*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Henderson, James. *Modernization in Colombia: The Laureano Gómez Years, 1889–1965*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001.

Jiménez, Michael. "Traveling Far in Grandfather's Car: The Life Cycle of a Central Colombian Coffee Estate. The Case of Viotá, Cundinamarca (1900–1930)." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 69 (1989): 185–219.

Karl, Robert A. *Forgotten Peace: Reform, Violence, and the Making of Contemporary Colombia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017.

Lasso, Marixa. *Myths of Harmony: Race and Republicanism during the Age of Revolution, Colombia, 1795–1831*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007.

Martin, Gerald. *Gabriel García Márquez: A Life*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2008.

McFarlane, Anthony. *Colombia before Independence: Economy, Society, and Politics under Bourbon Rule*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

McGraw, Jason. *The Work of Recognition: Caribbean Colombia and the Postemancipation Struggle for Citizenship*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

Murray, Pamela. *For Glory and Bolívar: The Remarkable Life of Manuela Sáenz, 1797–1856*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.

Myhre, David. Colombia: *Civil Conflict, State Weakness, and (In) security*. Princeton: Princeton University Program in Latin American Studies, 2003.

Palacios, Marco. *Between Legitimacy and Violence: A History of Colombia, 1875–2002*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

Paternostro, Silvana. *In the Land of God and Man: A Latin Woman's Journey*. New York: Putnam, 1998.

Porcelain, Sherri L. *Public Health and Beyond in Latin America and the Caribbean: Reflections from the Field*. New York: Routledge, 2022.

Randall, Stephen. *Colombia and the United States: Hegemony and Interdependence*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.

Rappaport, Joanne. *The Politics of Memory: Native Historical Interpretation in the Colombian Andes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Rausch, Jane. "Petroleum and the Transformation of the Llanos Frontier in Colombia: 1980 to the Present." *Latin Americanist* 53 (2009): 113–36.

Roldán, Mary. *Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946–1953*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Sáenz Rovner, Eduardo. *Conexión Colombia: una historia del narcotráfico entre los años 30 y los años 90*. Bogotá: Editorial Planeta Colombiana, 2021.

_____. *The Cuban Connection: Drug Trafficking, Smuggling, and Gambling in Cuba from the 1920s to the Revolution*. Translated by Ross Davidson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Safford, Frank and Marco Palacios. *Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Sanders, James. *Contentious Republicans: Popular Politics, Race, and Class in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004.

Stanfield, Michael E. *Of Beasts and Beauty: Gender, Race and Identity in Colombia*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013.

Sweig, Julia. "What Kind of War for Colombia." *Foreign Affairs* 81 (2002): 122–41.

Tate, Winifred. *Drugs, Thugs and Diplomats: U.S. Policymaking in Colombia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015.

Thibaud, Clément. *Repúblicas en armas: los ejércitos bolivarianos en la guerra de independencia en Colombia y Venezuela*. Bogotá: Academia Colombiana de Historia, 2021.

Van Isschot, Luis. *The Social Origins of Human Rights: Protesting Political Violence in Colombia's Oil Capitol, 1919–2010*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015.

Vásquez, Juan Gabriel. *The Sound of Things Falling*. Translated by Anne McLean. New York: Riverhead Books, 2014.

Wade, Peter. *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

_____. *Music, Race, and Nation: Música Tropical in Colombia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Williams, Raymond L. *The Colombian Novel, 1844–1987*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991.

Williams, Raymond L. and Kevin G. Guerrieri. *Culture and Customs of Colombia*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999.

DOCUMENTS

"Acuerdo Final para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera". Online document available at *Oficina del Alto Comisionado para la Paz*, http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co/Documents/proceso-paz-farc-acuerdo-final.pdf#search=biblioteca.

Barreiro Posada, Paula Andrea. *Indómita: Colombia según el cine extranjero*. Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario, 2019. Online document available at *Digitalia Hispánica*, https://www-digitaliapublishing-com.banrep.basesdedatosezproxy.com/a/60569.

Buitrago Rojas, Andrea Paola, Marco Tulio Yate Yara, Marcelina Cundumí Díaz y Lilia Yaya. *La paz desde abajo: Breve historia, impacto y participación de los movimientos sociales en Colombia*. Bogotá: Ediciones USTA, 2018. Online document available at *Digitalia Hispánica*, https://www-digitaliapublishing-com.banrep.basesdedatosezproxy.com/a/80562.

Cepeda, Hernando y Sebastián Vargas. *Recorridos de la historia cultural en Colombia*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2020. Online document available at *Digitalia Hispánica*, https://www-digitaliapublishing-com.banrep.basesdedatosezproxy.com/a/104050.

Comisión Histórica del conflicto y sus víctimas, *Contribución al entendimiento del conflicto armado en Colombia*. Bogotá: Ediciones Desde Abajo, 2015. Online document available at *Ciencias Humanas, Universidad Nacional de Colombia*, https://www.humanas.unal.edu.co/observapazyconflicto/files/5714/6911/9376/Version_final_informes_CHCV.pdf.

Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición. *Hay Futuro sí hay verdad: Informe Final de la Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición*. Bogotá: Comisión de la verdad,

2022. Online document available at *Comisión de la Verdad*, https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co.

GMH (Grupo de Memoria Histórica). *¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de guerra y dignidad*. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional, 2013.

Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz. *Biblioteca del proceso de Paz con las FARC-EP*. Bogotá: Presidencia de la República de Colombia, 2019. Online document available at *Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz,* https://www.jep.gov.co/Sala-de-Prensa/Paginas/Biblioteca-del-proceso-de-paz.aspx.

Index

Page references for figures are italicized.

9/11. *See* September 11 attacks

Abad Faciolince, Héctor, 195–96
Abu Ghraib, 189
Aburra Valley, xiii
Acevedo y Gómez, José, 20–21
Acosta, Joaquín, 191
Acosta de Samper, Soledad, 191–92
Acts of the Twentieth of July, 84
Adams, John, 60
Admirable Constitution, 54
The Adventures and Misadventures of Maqroll, 194
Afro-Colombians, xv, 33–35, 38–40, 52, 57–58, 77, 194, 200–201, 205
Agrarian Credit Bank, 138
Agreement of La Uribe (1984), 119
Agricultural Society of Colombia, 86
Air Force of Colombia, 85, 114
ajiaco, 218
Alegría, Ciro, 194
Alfinger, Ambrosio, 12
Allende, Salvador, 234
Alliance for Progress, 101, 139, 227, 232, 241
Álvarez Lleras, Antonio, 196
Amar y Borbón, José, 18, 21
Amazonas, Department of, *50–51*
Amazonia, 35–38, *36*, 44, 52, 97–98, 175, 193, 221, 228, 267
Amazon River, 37–38, 44, 175, 228
Ambalema, *177*, 180
American Airlines flight 965, 196
American Revolution, 55
Ampudia, Juan de, 12
ANAPO (Popular National Alliance), 103, 115
Andalzúa, Gloria, 252
Andes Mountains, 11–12, 28, 33–35, 37, 44–45, 100, 104, 108, 129, 132–33, 171, 178, 200, 218, 221, 243, 250, 266, 270
Angostura, 27–28; Congress of, 27–30, 53
Angulo, Raimundo, 210
Antilles, 27, 39
Antioqueño Colonization in Western Colombia, 244
Antioquia, 1812 Constitution of, 25, 55
Antioquia, Department of, 12–14, *19*, 22, 25, 44, *45–46*, 46, *50–51*, 55, 104–5, 107, 128, 134, 176, *177*, 180, 188, 193, 206, 218, 226, 238, 244, 251, 262

Apure, Department of (Gran Colombia), *29*
Arab Colombians, 41
Arab-Israeli conflict, 41
Aracataca, 136, 190
Arango, Débora, 188–89
Aranzazu, 178
Arauca, city of, *50*
Arauca, Department of, *50–51*
Arenas, Jacobo, 114
Arenas, Reinaldo, 253
Argentina, 41, 43, 89, 91, 93–94, 99, 127, 132–33, 139, 141, 197, 207, 209, 239, 243–45, 266, 270, 276
Arias, Ricardo, 4
Aristizábal Vásquez, Juan Estaban. *See* Juanes
Arjona, 209
Armenia, city of, *51*, *177*, 217
"Arte y Violencia en Colombia Desde 1948," 277, 278n2
Asuay, Department of (Gran Colombia), *29*
Atlanta, 244
Atlántico, Department of, *50–51*
Atrato River, 172, 175
AUC (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia), 105–6, 108, 117, 122, 237, 262
Audiencia de Santafé de Bogotá, 13–14, 18, 21, 23, 33, 55
The Autumn of the Patriarch, 136–37
Avenida de las Américas, 109
Avenida El Dorado, 109
Avianca Airlines, 215, 229, 244
El Aviso, 73

Bachelet, Michelle, 269
Bacrim, 122, 262
Bad Bunny, 201
Bagley, Bruce, 233
Balboa, Vasco Nuñez de, 10
baldías, 33
bambuco, 200
Banana Massacre. *See* Ciénaga, 1928 massacre at
Ban Ki-Moon, 90
Bank of the Republic, 86, 135, 169, 264; Museum of the, 186, 189
Baptists, 39
Barbosa, *177*
Barcelona, 188
Barco, Virgilio, 61, 105, 120
Barnitz, Jacqueline, 187
Barranquilla, *8*, 38, 41, *51*, 98, 129, 176, *177*, 179, 184, 201, 204, 215, 219, 255
Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de Guerra y Dignidad, 109, 260
Bastidas, Rodrigo de, 10, 12
Battle of Bailén, 15
Battle of Boyacá, 28, 222
Battle of Pantano de Vargas, 28
Belalcázar, Sebastián de, 12, 269
Belgium, 231
Belize, 223
Bergquist, Charles, 133, 233
Bermúdez, Luis Eduardo "Lucho," 200
Bernal, Egan, 208
Betancur, Belisario, 103–4, 119–20, 195, 269
Bidlack-Mallarino Treaty, 223
Bishop, Greg, 207
BLAA (Luis Ángel Arango Library), 213
Blow (2001), 255
BMX, 208–9
Boden, Mark, 4
Bogotá, xiii, xv, 2, *8*, 18, 29–31, 38, 40–41, *51*, 53–54, 74, 80, 83, 85, 89–92, 95–96, 98–106, 109, 114–15, 120, 129–30, 138–39, 142, 171–73, 176–*77*, 179–81, 183–84, 187–89, 193–200, 204–7, 212–16, 229–30, 232, 238, 240–41, 246, 250–51, 254, 259, 262–63, 268, 270; El Cartucho neighborhood in, 107, 213, 220n4; Distrito Capital, *50*; Municipal

Council of, 31; Santafé de, 13–15, 17–23, 26, 28–29, 44, 171; Savannah of, 13, 176–*77*, 180, 205, 271–72
Bogotá River, 175
Bogotazo. *See* Nueve de Abril
Bolívar, Department of, 12, 38–39, *46*, *50–51*, 174
Bolívar, Simón, 26–31, 53–54, 67, 91, 115, 222, 249
Bolivarianism, 73
Bolivia, 37, 53, 104, 128
Bolshevik Revolution, 97
Bonaparte, Joseph, 15
Bonaparte, Louis Napoleon, 223
Bonaparte, Napoleon, 9, 14–15, 17, 26
Borges, Jorge Luis, 197
Bosconia, *177*
Boston, 130, 244
Botero, Fernando, xv, 126n3, 188–90, 204, 254
Bourbon Reforms, 130
Boyacá, Department of, 12, *29*, *46*, 46, *50–51*, 173, 182, 208, 215
Braun, Herbert "Tico," 99, 278n1
Brazil, 38, 41, 43, 94, 99, 127, 131, 133, 139, 141, 185, 193, 209–10, 213, 216, 221, 228, 235, 266, 269–70, 276; Empire of, *29*, 175
Brecht, Bertolt, 196
Brexit, 256
Briceño Suárez, Jorge "Mono Jojoy," 103
British Empire. *See* Great Britain
Brussels, 187
Bucaramanga, *51*, *177*, 181, 184, 269
Buenaventura, 172–74, 176, *177*, 178, 180–81, 251
Buenaventura, Enrique, 197
Buenos Aires, xiii, *177*, 187, 197, 212; Viceroyalty of, 16
Buneau-Varilla, Philippe, 226
Bush, George W., 237–38
Bushnell, David, 3, 5, 131, 134, 222, 276
Caballero, Luis, 189
Caballero y Góngora, Antonio, 90
cabeceras municipales (heads of municipalities), 48
cabildo (town council), 13, 16–17, 20, 22; *abierto* (open town council), 20, 22
Cabo de la Vela (Guajira Peninsula), 10
cacique (chiefdom), 11
Café con aroma de mujer, 217
Calamar, *177*
Caldas, Department of, *50–51*, 134, 176, 178, 205
Cali, 2, *8*, 12, 20, 22, 38, *51*, 104, 139, 142, 174–75, *177*, 181, 184, 196, 251, 269
Cali Cartel, 105
California, 223, 234, 244
Calimas, 12
Camino Real, 171
campesinos, 108, 113–15, 123, 140, 215, 231, 234, 261
Canada, 132, 213, 239, 245, 247–48
Cano, Alfonso, 103
Cañón, James, 254
El Capo, 118
Caquetá, Department of, *50–51*, 121
Caracas, 13, 29–30, 251, 266–67, 270
Caracol, 215–16
Cárdenas, Lázaro, 99, 276
Cardi B, 201
Caribbean, 34, 39–40, 91, 129, 132, 136, 172, 174, 176, 178, 209, 223–25, 235; coastal region, 10, 12, 20, 22, 26, 33–35, 37, 39–40, 44, 46, 52, 95, 171, 179, 187
Carnival, 204–5
Caro, José Eusebio, 74, 191
Caro, Miguel Antonio, 94, 225
Carrasquilla, Tomás, 193
Cartagena, *8*, 12–14, *19*–22, 23, 25–26, 38, *45*, *51*, 90, 93, 118, 129, 171, 176, *177*, 179, 189, 199–200, 206, 209–11, 222, 228, 271

Cartago, *177*, 180
Carter, Jimmy, 248
Casanare, 14, *19*, 19, 27–28, *50–51*
Castaño, Carlos, 106, 119, 237
Castaño, Fidel, 106, 119
Castaño, Vicente, 119
Castilla, town of, 115
Castro, Fidel, 102, 114–15, 122, 230, 234, 253, 270
Castro, Raúl, 122, 227–28
Catholicism. *See* Roman Catholic Church
Catholic University of Leuven, 231
Cauca, Department of, *29*, 39, *46*, 46, *50–51*, 115, 128, 262
Cauca River, *8*, 12, 92–93, 113, 172, 175, *177*, 180
Cauca Valley. *See* Valle del Cauca, Department of
caudillo (strongman), 48, 53–54, 68, 73–74, 77, 93
Cayos expedition, 27
CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference), 233
Centenary Park, 198
Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. *See* National Center for Historical Memory
Cerrejón, 140–41
Cesar, Department of, *50–51*
CEV (Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and No Repetition), 109, 110n11, 261
Chagall, Marc, 190
Charles III of Spain, 179
Charles IV of Spain, 15
Chávez, Carlos, 186
Chávez Frias, Hugo, 108, 122–23, 126n4, 236, 249–50, 270
Chicago, 216, 252
Chile, 43, 85, 133, 139, 234, 239, 245, 251, 269–70, 276; captaincy general of, 16
China, 208, 213, 217, 239, 241, 267
Chiquinquirá, *177*; Virgin of, 204
chisperos (spark makers), 21
Chocó, Department of, 13–14, *19*, 25, 38–39, *45*, *50–51*, 128, 178, 251, 272
Chorographic Expedition, 82
ciclovía, 214
Ciénaga, 1928 massacre at, 97–98, 136–37, 227, 229
CINEP, 238
Cisneros, Sandra, 252
Citará, 22
La Civilización, 74
Clancy, Tom, 255
Clásicos de la Provincia, 200
Clear and Present Danger, 255
Clinton, Bill, 107, 237, 247
Cocora Valley, 272
Codazzi, Agustín, 82, 187, 276
Coffee and Conflict in Colombia, 1886–1910, 133
Cold War, 114–15, 139, 228, 231, 235
coleos (rodeos), 203, 209
Coleo World Cup, 209
Collateral Damage, 255
Collazos, Oscar, 216
Colombia: Fragmented Land, Divided Society, 3–4
Colombiana, 255
Colombian Academy of History, 84
Colombian Academy of Language, 83
Colombian Air Navigation Company (CCNA), 179
Colombian Civil War (1854), 92
Colombian Civil War (1860–1862), 67, 92, 192
Colombian Civil War (1876), 81–82
Colombian Civil War (1885), 60, 79
Colombian Civil War (1895), 60
El Colombiano, 184
Colombian peso, 86, 143, 251, 256, 273n2, 275
Colombia-Peru War (1932–1933), 96–98, 215, 221, 228

Colombia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, 238–39
Colombia Siglo XX desde la Guerra de los Mil Días hasta la elección de Álvaro Uribe, 4
Colón, 95, 176, 181, 223, 225
colonos (tenant farmers/rural poor), 37, 48–49
Columbia Pictures, 194
Columbia University, 254
Communist Party of Colombia (PCC), 62, 67, 114–15, 234
Como los muertos (*Just Like the Dead*), 196
Comuneros Rebellion (1781), 89–90, 130
Concordat of 1887, 5, 79, 93, 225
Congress of Colombia, 56, 63, 67–68, 90, 104, 108, 114, 118, 125, 180, 198, 256
Congress of Delegates, 25
Conservative Party, xiv, 61, 72–76, 78–80, 82–83, 90, 92–99, 101, 103, 113, 133, 137, 169, 184, 191, 197, 225–26, 228–29, 232, 238; Radical, 80, 85
Constitutional Assembly (1990–1991), 67, 90, 120, 244
Constitutional Court of Colombia, 79
constitutional reform of 1910, 61
constitutional reform of 1936, 56, 79–80
constitutional reform of 1945, 57
constitutional reform of 1957, 57
constitutional reform of 1958, 62, 67
constitutional reform of 1975, 57
constitutional reform of 1986, 62, 64
Constitution of 1821, 29–30, 40
Constitution of 1832, 54–56, 63–64, 81
Constitution of 1843, 56, 64, 81
Constitution of 1853, 56, 60
Constitution of 1858, 56, 60
Constitution of 1863, 56, 60, 78, 93
Constitution of 1886, 5, 56–57, 60–61, 64–65, 68, 78–79, 82, 84, 93, 181, 216, 225
Constitution of 1991, xv, 33, 37, 40, 57, 59, 62–65, 67–68, 68n2, 76–80, 86, 90, 116, 120, 195, 204, 244, 277
Contadora initiative, 235, 241
convivencia (living together as one), xv, 95–96
Copa Libertadores, 207
Cordillera, Central, *8*, 187
Cordillera, Eastern, *8*, 13
Cordillera, Western *8*
Córdoba, Department of, 12, 46, *50–51*, 269
Coro, 12
Correa, Rafael, 108, 122–23, 236
corregimiento, 13
Cosa, Juan de la, 10
Costa Rica, 271–72
COVID-19 pandemic, 2, 127–28, 239, 245, 252, 263–68, 271
Cowards Don't Make History, 4
creoles, 16, 18, 20, 35, 55
Crimean War, 41
Cruz, Dilan, 2, 268
The Crystal Frontier, 253
Cuatro Esquinas (Mosquera), 180
Cuba, 91, 102, 114, 131, 185–86, 197, 209, 225, 227–28, 230, 234, 245, 252–53, 266, 276; captaincy general of, 16
Cuban Revolution, 102, 139, 230, 232, 234, 253, 276
Cúcuta, 29, 39–40, *51*, 175, *177*
Cúcuta Constitution. *See* Constitution of 1821
Cuenca, 13
Cumaná, 13
cumbia, 186, 200–201
Cundinamarca, 12, 23–26, *29*–31, 42, 45, *46*, *50–51*, 53, 119, 251; 1811 Constitution of, 24–25, 58, 60; Republic of, 23–26
Cunha, Euclides da, 193
Curitiba, 213

Dabeiba, 206

DAFP (Administrative Department of Public Function), 67
DANE (Administrative Department of Statistics), 67, 127, 218
Darío, Rubén, 185
DAS (Administrative Department of Security), 67
Davis, Wade, 4
Davos, 267
Declaration of Independence (Colombia), 20–21, 83–84
"De Colombia a John F. Kennedy," 188
Decree of 1809, 16
de la Pava, Sergio, 253
Delirium, 195
De Palma, Brian, 255
Depp, Johnny, 255
desplazados. *See* internally displaced persons (IDPs)
Detalle de un genocidio, 189
Devia Silva, Luis Edgar. *See* Reyes, Raúl
El Diamante, *177*
Díaz, Porfirio, 94
Dinamismo, 188
Disney, 201, 272
Divino Niño Jesús, 204, 206
El Diviso, *177*
Dix, Robert, 101
Doce cuentos peregrinos, 253
Dominican Republic, 227
Don Matias, 244
Dreaming in Cuban, 253
drug trafficking, 1, 37, 43–44, 62, 77, 90, 104–5, 111–12, 116, 118–21, 124, 195, 203, 221, 234–38, 241, 245–47, 255, 262
Duque, Iván, 2, 241, 250, 259–60, 266–69

Eastern Plains. *See* Llanos Orientales
Echo of the Mountain, 181
Ecopetrol, 67, 137
Ecuador, 12, 15, 27, 29–30, 89, 108, 122, 127, 141, 172, 181, 200, 221, 235–36, 239, 241, 245, 248, 255, 267, 269; in Gran Colombia, 42, 53–54, 71, 110n2
Egypt, 107, 224
Eisenhower, Dwight D., 174
Elbers, Juan Bernardo, 174
El Dorado Airport, 138, 240
ELN (National Liberation Army), 1–2, 102, 106–8, 113–14, 116, 118–19, 125, 142, 231, 233, 237, 262–63, 270
El Salvador, 106, 133, 235
Emberá-Katío people, 206
Encanto, 201, 272–73
encomienda, 13
England. *See* Great Britain
Envigado, 140
EPL (Popular Liberation Army), 115, 120, 237
Escalona, Rafael, 200
Escobar, Andrés, 207
Escobar, Pablo, 104–5, 142, 234, 236, 247, 255
Escuela de Bellas Artes, 187
ESMAD (Riot Police), 268
El Espectador, 184, 251
Espinal, *177*
Espinosa, José María, 187
Espinosa, Leonor, 218
Estado Social de Derecho. *See* Social State of Rights
Export-Import Bank, 229

Facatativá, *177*
Falla, Alejandro, 208
Fals Borda, Orlando, 4, 101
"false positives" scandal, 117, 122, 238
FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), xv, 1, 62, 90, 102–3, 106–8, 112–14, 116–19, 121–25, 140, 142, 233–34, 236–38, 240–41, 247, 250–51, 254, 256–57, 259–62, 267–68; Second Conference of the, 114; Seventh Conference of the, 116
Federación Nacional de Cafeteros. *See* National Federation of Coffee Growers

Federation Pact, 25
Federmann, Nicolás de, 12
Ferdinand VII of Spain, 15–16, 17, 21–22, 24, 26
Figueroa, Óscar, 208
Figueroa, Pedro José, 187
First Republic of Colombia, 23, 67
First World War, 42, 96, 134–35, 263
Flandes, 176, *177*
Florencia, *51*
Flores Galindo, Alberto, 3
Florida (U.S.A.), 228, 244
FNPI (Foundation for New Ibero-American Journalism), 195
Ford, Harrison, 255
Forgotten Peace, 4
Formula 1, 207
France 14–15, 23, 41, 55, 92, 95, 140, 188–89, 208, 217, 221, 223–24, 245; Second Empire of, 223
Franco, Francisco, 188
"free womb" law. *See ley de libertad de vientres*
French Revolution, 15, 55
Fuentes, Carlos, 253
Fujimori, Alberto, 106
Fundación, *177*

Gadsden Purchase, 252
Gaitán, Jorge Eliécer, 98–99, 137, 229–30, 275–76, 278n1
Gaitán Durán, Jorge, 196
Galán, José Antonio, 90
Galán, Luis Carlos, 105, 120, 142
Galeano, Eduardo, 207
Galeano, Martín, 12
Gamarra, 178
Gambote, *177*
García, Cristina, 253
García Márquez, Gabriel, xv, 1, 6, 31, 136–37, 185, 190–91, 193–95, 201, 203, 210, 230, 235, 253–54, 272, 275
Garzón, 22
Garzón, Luis Eduardo "Lucho," 212
Gaviria Trujillo, Cesár, 120, 142, 247
General Electric, 215
The General in His Labyrinth, 31
Geographical Society of Colombia, 82
Germany, 41, 228–29, 245
Ghetto Klown, 254
Ginastera, Alberto, 185
Gini coefficient, 127, 143n1, 256, 270
Giraldo, Santiago, 208
Girardot, 176, *177*, 179
Giro de Italia, 208
Girón, 22, 40
Gitano people. *See* gypsies
Glencore, 140
golpe de estado, 67
Gómez, Laureano, 80, 138–39, 184, 188, 228, 231–32
Gómez, Pedro Nel, 188
Gómez Buendía, Hernando, 4
González Llorente, José, 20
Governing Autonomous Junta (Pore), 22
Granadine Confederation (1858–1863), 64, 71
Gran Colombia. *See* Republic of Colombia (1819–1830)
Grau, Enrique, 189
Great Britain, 12, 15, 27, *29*, 41, 95, 130, 221–23, 241, 244–45, 256
Great Depression, 97, 138, 228
Guainía, Department of, *50–51*
Guam, 225
Guanes, 12
Guatemala, 106, 133, 235; captaincy general of, 16
Guaviare, Department of, *50–51*
Guayaquil, 13, *29*
Guerrero, Julian, 272
Guggenheim Museum, 189
Guillermoprieto, Alma, 105, 110n10
Gutiérrez Girardot, Rafael, 191
Guyana, 13
Guzmán, Abimael, 106
Guzmán Campos, Germán, 101
gypsies, 33, 40

Haiti, 27
Haitian Revolution, 15
Harper, Stephen, 247
Havana, xiii, 1, 90, 117–18, 122–25, 185, 197, 227
Hay, John, 95
Haya de la Torre, Víctor Raúl, 99, 276
"Hay Futuro, si hay verdad," *See* "There is a future if there is truth"
Hay-Herrán Treaty, 95, 225
Henderson, Jim, 233
El Heraldo, 184
Heredia, Pedro de, 12
Hernández Suárez, Rodolfo, 269
Herrán, Tomás, 95
Herrera, Luis "Lucho," 208
Herrera y Vergara, Ignacio de, 17
He visto la noche, 194
Hispaniola, 10
Historia de Colombia Contemporánea (1920–2010), 4
Historia de la literatura en Nueva Granada, 83
Hobsbawm, Eric J., 231
Holy See, 5, 79, 93, 225, 233
Honda, town of, 95, 178
The House on Mango Street, 252
Houston, 244
Hoyos, Ana Mercedes, 188–89
Hughes, Langston, 194
Huila, Department of, *50–51*, 115
Humboldt, Alexander von, 186–87, 276

Ibagué, 13, *51*, *177*, 208, 254
Ibargüen, Caterine, 209
Iberian Peninsula, 9, 14
ICFES (national university entrance exam), 256
IMF (International Monetary Fund), 142
Indepaz (Institute of Studies for the Development of Peace), 262
Indian towns, 13, 44–45
Indigenous Colombians, xv, 11, 14, 33–38, 52, 57–58, 77, 79, 115, 141, 171, 205–6, 217, 263, 269
Inírida, *51*
Inline Speed Skating World Championships, 208
In Search of an Inca: Identity and Utopia in the Andes, 3
insertados, 109
Inter-American Development Bank, 215
internally displaced persons (IDPs), 111, 248
internally displaced persons of African descent (*afrodes*), 39
Iran, 237
Iraq, 237
Ireland, 245
Isaacs, Jorge, 191–92
Israel, 107
Isthmus, Department of (Gran Colombia), *29*
Italy, 41, 98, 188–89, 208, 217
I Took Panama, 197

Jaén, 13
Jamaica, 27, 39, 181, 191, 224
Jaramillo, Bernardo, 120
Jaramillo Uribe, Jaime, 276
J Balvin, 201, 277
Jeanneret-Gris, Charles-Edouard. *See* Le Corbusier
Jefferson, Thomas, 48, 222
JEP (Special Jurisdiction for Peace), 261
Jericó, *177*, 206
Jesuits. *See* Society of Jesus
Jiménez, Michael F., 89, 99
Jiménez de Quesada, Gonzalo, 12, 83
Johnson, Lyndon B., 227
joropo. *See música llanera*
Joseph I of Spain. *See* Bonaparte, Joseph
Juanes, 199
Judaism, 41

Karl, Robert, 4
Kemble Rowe, Caroline, 191
Kemmerer Mission (1923), 86, 135
Kennedy, Jacqueline B., 139, 232

Kennedy, John F., 98, 101, 139, 188, 198, 227, 232
Kerry, John, 90
Killing Pablo: The Hunt for the World's Greatest Outlaw, 4
Kirk, Robin, 4
Korean War, 114–15, 231–32, 241

Laches, 12
La Dorada, 176, *177*
La Frontera, *177*
La Guajira, Department of, 12, *50–51*, 140–41
Laín, Domingo, 114
Lara Bonilla, Rodrigo, 105
Latin American Security Operation (LASO), 115
Laverde Amaya, Isidoro, 83
La Violencia, xiv–xv, 34, 89, 99–101, 189, 197, 230–31
La violencia en Colombia: Estudio de un Proceso Social, 101
"La violencia y los cambios socioculturales en las áreas rurales de Colombia," 231
Law of Justice and Peace (Ley de Justicia y Paz). *See* Ley 975 (2005)
Law of Victims (Ley de víctimas), 239–40
League of Nations, 228
Lebanon, 41
Le Corbusier, 185, 199
La Lechuga, 186
Lecuona, Ernesto, 186
Leech, Gary, 4
LeGrand, Catherine, 99
Leguizamo, John, 254–55, 273
Lemaitre, Eduardo, 216
Leopard in the Sun, 195
Lesseps, Ferdinand de, 224–25
Leticia, *51*, 97–98, 228
Leticia Affair. *See* Colombia-Peru War (1932–1933)
Letterman, David, 211
Levy, Kurt, 193
Ley 975 (2005), 108, 117, 122, 248
ley de libertad de vientres, 40
Leyes Nuevas. *See* New Laws
Lezama Lima, José, 197
LGBTQ+ people, 261
Liberal Party, xiv, 61, 72–76, 78–79, 82–83, 90, 92–101, 113, 119, 121, 133, 137, 169, 184, 215, 225, 227, 229, 236, 238; Radical, 48, 78, 82, 85, 92–93, 180
Lima, 185, 212
Lincoln, Abraham, 191
Living to Tell the Tale, 230
llanos orientales, 12, 37, *45*, 114, 119, 199, 201, 272
Lleras Camargo, Alberto, 119
Lleras Restrepo, Carlos, 140
Loew, Jacques, 231
Loja, 13, 17
Londoño Arias, Juan Luis. *See* Maluma
López, Claudia, 263
López, José Hilario, 92
Lorica, 194
Los Angeles, 216, 244
Love in the Time of Cholera, 254

M-19 (19 April Movement), 2, 103, 115, 120, 269
Madonna, 201
Madre Laura. *See* Montoya Upegui, María Laura de Jesús
Madrid, 15, 187
Maduro, Nicolás, 236, 241, 250–51, 266–67
Magdalena, Department of, 12, *29*, *46*, *50–51*, 119
Magdalena Fruit Company, 227
Magdalena River, 4, *8*, 12, 30, 39, 95, 113, 129, 132, 172–76, 178, 204, 216, 240
Magdalena River of Dreams: A Story of Colombia, 4
Mahates, Municipality of, 38
Mainas, 13
Major League Baseball, 208

The Making of Modern Colombia: A Nation in Spite of Itself, 3
Mallarino, Víctor, 196
Maluma, 201, 273, 277
MAMBO (Museum of Modern Art in Bogotá), 189
Managua, 235
Manizales, *51*, *177*, 178, 180–81, 184, 217
Manual de Historia de Colombia, 190
MAQL (Quintín Lame Armed Movement), 115, 120
Maracaibo, 12–13, 175
Margarita Island, 26
María, 191–92
Marinilla, 22
Marín Marín, Pedro Antonio. *See* Marulanda, Manuel "Tirofijo"
Mariquita, 13–14, *19*, 22–23, 25, *45*, 172, 178, 254
Márquez, Francine, 267–68
Márquez, Jose Ignacio de, 91
Marroquín, José Manuel, 191
Marseilles, 231
Martí, José, 185, 253
Marulanda, Manuel "Tirofijo," 102–3, 108, 121
mayorazgos, 58, 69n5
Mebarak Ripoll, Isabel. *See* Shakira
Medellín, xiii, xv, *8*, 22, 38, 46, *51*, 104–5, 134, 138–40, 171–73, *177*, 179–81, 184, 188–90, 193–96, 201, 203, 206–7, 211–12, 214, 218, 226, 233, 244, 251; Metro of, 211–13
Medellín Cartel, 105, 234
Medellín Radio, 181
Medellín River, 212
Megaton, Oliver, 255
Melo, José María, 67
Memorial de Agravios (Memorandum of Grievances), 17
Mérida, 13
mestizos, 14, 34–35, 38, 42, 55, 131, 200
Meta, Department of, *50–51*
Meta River, 175
Mexican-American War (1846–1848), 134
Mexican Revolution, 252, 276
Mexico, 89, 91–94, 99, 131, 134, 181, 184, 186, 194, 216–18, 223–24, 227–28, 234–35, 245, 252, 255, 266, 270; New Spain, Viceroyalty of, 16, 128–29
Mexico City, xiii, 185, 187, 190, 194, 212, 240, 270, 275
Miami, 216, 247, 255
Miami Vice, xiv
Military Aviators of Colombia. *See* Air Force of Colombia
Military Forces of Colombia, 85
Military Government (1957–1958), 67, 139
Military School of Cadets, 85
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 66
Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism, 66, 272
Ministry of Culture, 66
Ministry of Development (dissolved), 65, 173
Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, 66
Ministry of Equality and Equity, 66
Ministry of Foreign Relations, 65
Ministry of Government. *See* Ministry of the Interior
Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 66
Ministry of Housing, City, and Territory, 66
Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications, 66
Ministry of Justice and Law, 66
Ministry of Labor, 66
Ministry of Mail and Telegraphs. *See* Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications
Ministry of Mines and Energy, 66
Ministry of National Defense, 65, 138

Ministry of National Education, 65
Ministry of Public Works. *See* Ministry of Transportation
Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation, 66
Ministry of Sports, 66
Ministry of Taxation and Public Credit, 65
Ministry of the Interior, 65
Ministry of Transportation, 66, 173
Miranda, Francisco de, 27, 54
Miranda, Lin-Manuel, 273
Miss Colombia pageant, 210–11
Mito, 196–97
Mitú, *51*
Mockus Sivickas, Antanas, 212
Mocoa, *51*
Modern Family, 255
MOMA (Museum of Modern Art), 189
Mompox, 22–23, 25, 204, 271
Monroe, James, 222
Montería, *51*
Montoya, Juan Pablo, 207
Montoya Upegui, María Laura de Jesús, 206
Morillo, Pablo, 26–28
Morocco, 247
Mosquera, Joaquín, 31
Mosquera, Tomás Cipriano de, 73, 82, 92–93, 132
Movistar, 208
Muisca people, xv, 12, 129
MundoFox, 119
Museo del Oro, 186
Museum of Antioquia, 190
Museum of Memory of Colombia, 109, 260–61
Music, Race and Nation, 200
música llanera, 186, 201
Mussolini, Benito, 98
Mutis, Álvaro, 193–95, 276
Mutis, José Celestino, 186

A Naked Singularity, 253
Nanjing, 208
narconovela, 119
Narcos, xiv, 255
narcotraficantes. *See* drug trafficking
Nariño, Antonio, 24
Nariño, Department of, 39, *50–51*, 128, 262
NARP (Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, and Palenquero), 34, 38
Narváez y Latorre, Antonio de, 16–17
National Army of Colombia, 72, 85, 96, 114, 227
National Association of Manufacturers, 86
National Association of Merchants, 86
National Center for Historical Memory, 109, 260
National Commission of Reparations and Reconciliation, 109
National Company of Telecommunications. *See* TELECOM
National Federation of Coffee Growers, 86, 134, 138, 208
National Front, 61–62, 75–76, 80, 90, 99–102, 119, 139, 231, 233
National Library of Colombia, 216
National Museum of Colombia, 198
National Navy of Colombia, 85
National Party, 76
National Police, 85
National Postal System, 180
National Radio Communications Company, 182
National School of Dramatic Art, 196
National School of Mines, 172
National Treasury, 65, 86
National University of Colombia, 101, 172, 198, 212, 219, 229
National Vaccination Plan, 264
Naval Cadet School, 85
Navarro Wolff, Antonio, 120
Negret, Edgar, 188
Neiva, 13–14, *19*, 22–23, 25, *45*, *51*, 172, 176, *177*

New Granada, 13, 15–17, 20–23, 25–29, 45, 53–55, 130, 186, 191; General Congress of the Kingdom of, 21–23; Republic of (1831–1858), 31, 53–54, 60, 71, 73, 92, 180, 222–23, 263; Supreme Junta of the Kingdom of, 20–22, 24, 78; United Provinces of, 23, 25–26, 29
New Jersey, 244
New Laws, 35
New Orleans, 204
New York City, 54, 188–89, 193, 198, 211, 216, 234, 244, 246, 253–54; Central Park, 198, 213
Nicaragua, 185, 223–25, 228, 235, 271, 276
La Nieve del Almirante, 194
Nobel Peace Prize, 1, 125, 240, 267–68
Nobel Prize in Literature, xv, 1, 6, 190, 277
Noceti, Andrea, 211
"Nocturno III," 192
Noriega, Manuel, 271
Norte de Santander, Department of, 12, 45, 46, *50–51*, 178, 262
North Korea, 237
Novelas y cuadros de la vida suramericana, 192
Nóvita, 22–23
Nueva Andalucía, 10
nueve de abril, 98–99, 196–97, 275
El Nuevo Liberal, 184
El Nuevo Siglo, 184
Núñez, Rafael, 84, 93–94, 225

OAS (Organization of American States), 229–30
Obama, Barack, 142, 191, 227, 239
Obando Giraldo, Sebastián. *See* Yatra, Sebastián
Oblivion: A Memoir, 196
Obregón, Alejandro, 189
Ocampo, José Antonio, 270
Ocampo, Victoria, 197
Ocaña, 30, 178
Ocaña Convention, 54
OECD, 264
Office of Longitudes and Borders, 82
Ojeda, Alonso de, 10
Olaya Herrera, Enrique, 227–28
Olmsted, Frederick Law, 198
Olympic games, 208
One Hundred Years of Solitude, 136, 185, 190, 201, 275
Operation Marquetalia, 114, 234, 254
Oquist, Paul, 101
Orejuela brothers, 105
Origenes, 197
Orinoco, Department of (Gran Colombia), *29*
Orinoco River, 27, 37, 44, 175
Orinoquía, 35, 37, 45, 52
Osorio Balvin, José Álvaro. *See* J Balvin
Ospina, Pedro Nel, 135, 226
Ospina Pérez, Mariano, 67, 98–99, 138, 184
Ospina Rodríguez, Mariano, 73–74, 92
Ottoman Empire, 42
Our Lady of the Assassins, 194

Pacific, 172, 174, 176, 178, 181, 224–25, 228; coastal region, 22, 35, 37–39, 45, 95, 143, 251, 272
Pact of Ralito, 117
Padilla, Herberto, 253
El País, 184
Pajón, Mariana, 208–9
Palacios, Marco, 3, 5, 97, 105, 136, 139
Palacio de Justicia (Palace of Justice), 103–4, 195
palenque (runaway slave community), 38
Palenque de San Basilio, 38
palenquero, 34, 38–39
Palestine, 41
Palme, Olof, 235
Palmira, *177*
Pamplona, 13–14, *19*, 20, 22–23, 25, 172, 188

Panama, 5, 10, 13–15, *19*, 25, 42, 71, 89, 95, 110n2, 129, 133, 172, 176, 181, 200–201, 209, 223–26, 235, 251, 271, 276; 1903 separation from Colombia, 6, 89–90, 94–97, 133, 135, 197, 225–27, 241, 276
Panama Canal, 135, 178, 224–26
Panama City, 95, 176, 223, 226
Panama Railroad, 95, 176, *177*, 180, 223–24, 226
Pando y Sanllorente, Juan José, 15
Los papeles del infierno (*Documents from Hell*), 197
Pardo Leal, Jaime, 120
Paris, 187–89, 193, 199
Parque Nacional Natural de los Nevados, 272
Parra, Fabio, 208
Parsons, James, 244
Pasión vagabunda, 194
Pasto, 12, *51*, 91, 172, 205
Pastos, Chiefdom of, 12
Pastrana, Andrés, 106–7, 121, 142, 237
Pastrana, Misael, 103, 115
Paternostro, Silvana, 4
La Patria, 184
Patriotic Junta (Tunja), 22
Paz Total, 2, 256, 262–63
Peace Accords of 2016, xv, 1, 2, 90, 102, 117, 123–25, 233–34, 240–41, 255–57, 259–62, 267–69, 271; plebiscite on the, 1, 90, 118, 123, 125, 240, 259
Peace Colombia. *See* Plan Colombia
Peace Corps, 101, 233, 241
Pécaut, Daniel, 101
Pedro II of Brazil, 175
Peñalosa, Enrique, 212–13
Peninsulares, 26, 40, 55
Pereira, *51*, *177*, 217
Pérez, Carlos Andrés, 249
Pérez, Manuel "el *cura* Pérez," 114
Perón, Eva, 98–99, 110n6, 276
Perón, Juan, 99, 276
Personae, 254
Peru, 30, 96–97, 99, 104, 106, 131, 141, 181, 209, 218, 221, 228, 235, 239, 270, 272, 276; Viceroyalty of, 16, 128–29, 131
peso. *See* Colombian peso
Pétion, Alexandre, 27
Petro, Gustavo, xvi, 2, 118, 120, 125, 143, 250, 256, 259–60, 262–63, 267–70
Pew Research Center, 244
Pfizer, 264
PGA tour, 207, 277
Philippines, the, 225; captaincy general of the, 16
Picasso, Pablo, 190
Pijaos, 12
Pimienta, Lido, 201
La Pintada, *177*
Pitbull, 201
Pizarro, Carlos, 120
Plan Colombia, 2, 107, 117, 121, 127, 142, 221, 237–38, 247
Plan Patrióta, 121
Plaza Botero, 190
Plaza de Bolívar, 100, 103, 198, 204
Pontificia Universidad Javieriana, 219
Popayán, 12–14, 17, *19*, 22, 25, *45*, *51*, 129, 171–72, *177*, 179, 184, 188, 269, 271
Pope Francis, 206
Pope Paul VI, 233
Pore, 19, 22
porro, 200
Portobello, 129
Portugal, 9
Potosí, 128
Presley, Elvis, 200
Prías Alape, Jacobo, 119
Protests of 2019, 2, 268
Protests of 2021, 2, 268–69
Provisional Junta of Health and Public Security (Popayán), 22
PRT (Workers Revolutionary Party), 115, 120
pueblos de Indios. *See* Indian towns

puente, 203
Puente del Común, 171
Puerto Berrío, 176, *177*, 179
Puerto Carreño, *51*
Puerto Colombia, *177*
Puerto Rico, 91, 201, 225, 245–46; captaincy general of, 16
Puerto Wilches, *177*
Putumayo River, 175
Putumayo, Department of, *50–51*, 272

Quibdó, 22, *51*, 175
Quimbayas, 12
Quindío, Department of, *50–51*, 134, 176
Quinta de Bolívar, 115, 187
Quintana, José, 209
Quintana Rojos, Nairo A. "Naironman," 208
Quito, 12–13, 18–19, 28–31, 53, 185, 187
Quiyancingas, 12

La Radio Nacional, 182
Radio Sutatenza, 182, 215
raizal, 34, 38–39
Ramírez Villamizar, Eduardo, 188
Randall, Stephen J., 223–24
Rappaport, Joanne, 4
Rauschenberg, Robert, 190
RCN Colombian Television, 119, 215
Reed, Thomas, 198
Regency Council, 17, 21–24
Regeneration (movement), 93, 187, 225
reggaeton, 201
Régimen del Terror, 26
remittances (*remesas*), 239, 243, 251
Renault, 140
La República, 184
Republic of Colombia (1819–1830), 28–31, 42, 53–54, 60, 67, 71, 73, 92
resguardo (territories for indigenous peoples), 13, 17, 35, 58
Restrepo, Laura, 193, 195, 210
Revolution of the Rocket, 18
Reyes, Rafael, 67, 85, 95–96, 173, 226
Reyes, Raúl, 108, 122, 236
Rio de Janeiro, xiii, 204, 208–9
Riohacha, 13–14, *19*, *51*
Rionegro, 22, 104
Ríos, Iván, 108
Riosucio, 205
Risaralda, Department of, *50–51*, 134, 176
Rivera, Diego, 188
Rivera, José Eustasio, 191, 193
Rizzo, John Del, 206
Robledo, Jorge, 12
Rocca, Maurice Alberto "Mo," 254
Rodó, José Enrique, 185
Rodríguez Feo, José, 197
Rojas, Ezequiel, 73
Rojas Pinilla, Gustavo, 67, 76, 80, 86, 103, 115, 119, 138–39, 215; 1953–1957 dictatorship of, 62, 67, 76, 80, 113, 138, 194
Rom. *See* gypsies
Roman Catholic Church, xiv, 5, 24, 39, 43, 57, 60, 63, 72, 74, 77–80, 82, 84, 91–94, 102, 109, 114, 131, 135–36, 169, 182, 186, 188–89, 196, 203–6, 219, 225, 230–33, 276
Romania, 247
Rome, 1, 229
Romero, Simon, 210
Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 66
Roosevelt, Theodore, 191, 197, 209, 224–26
Rosas, Juan Manuel de, 94
Rother, Leopold, 198
Rousseff, Dilma, 269
Russia, 97, 265

Sacred Heart of Jesus, 79–80
Sáenz, Manuela, 30
Sáenz Vargas, Guillermo León. *See* Cano, Alfonso
Safford, Frank, 3, 5
Salavarrieta, Policarpa, 187, 275
Salcedo, Guadalupe, 119

Salcedo, José Joaquín, 215
Salmona, Rogelio, 199
Salomón-Lozano Treaty, 228
Samper, Ernesto, 121, 142, 236
Samper, José María, 192
San Agustín, Chiefdom of, 12
San Andrés, city of, *51*
San Andrés, Providencia, and Santa Catalina, Archipelago of, 34, 38–39, *50–51*, 235, 262
Sandinistas, 235
San José del Guaviare, *51*
San Miguel, town of, *177*
San Pedro Claver, 206
San Sebastián de Urabá, Fort of, 10
Santa Anna, Antonio López de, 93
Santafé. *See* Bogotá
Santafé junta. *See* New Granada
Santamaría, Andrés de, 187–88
Santa María la Antigua del Darién, Fort of, 10
Santa Marta, *8*, 12–14, *19*, 22, 26, 30, *45*, *51*, 91, 97, 136, 141, 171, 176, *177*, 195, 200, 222, 234, 249
Santander, Department of, *46*, 47, *50–51*, 102, 113, 119, 129–30, 174
Santander, Francisco de Paula, 28–30, 54, 74, 180
Santander de Quilichao, 115
Santanderian Aviation Company (COSADA), 179
Santanderism, 73
Santo Domingo (Antioquia), 193
Santos, Juan Manuel, 1, 108, 118, 122, 125, 234, 239–40, 250, 256, 267–68
Santa Rosa de Viterbo, town of, 173
San Vicente del Caguán, 106, 121
São Paulo, 187, 212, 240
SCADTA (Colombo-German Society of Air Transport). *See* Avianca Airlines
Scarface, 255
Schroeder, Barbet, 195
Second World War, 41–42, 138, 196, 228–29, 231, 241
September 11 attacks, 108, 238, 247
"Ser Pilo Paga," 256
Seventh Ballot movement, 59
Shakira, 199, 201, 277
Shining Path, 106
Sibaté, *177*
sicarios (hired killers), 105
Silva, Casa de la Poesía, 193
Silva, José Asunción, 191–93, 275
Simón Bolívar, Liberator and Father of the Nation, 187
Sincelejo, *51*
Sinclair, Upton, 193
Sinú, 12
sitios (free settlements of people of color), 45
Soacha, 105, *177*
Social State of Rights, 59, 68n2, 79
Society of Jesus, 74, 92, 186, 206, 219, 238
Socorro, 14, 17, *19*, 19–20, 23, 89, 129–30
Socorro Rodríguez, Manuel del, 83
Sogamoso, 23, *177*
Sopó, 271
The Sound of Things Falling, 195
Soviet Union, 224, 235
Spain, 9, 15–18, 21–28, 30, 34–35, 37, 55, 57, 73, 91, 119, 130–31, 179, 186, 188–89, 199, 210–11, 221, 224–25, 245, 247–49, 251, 253
Spanish-American War, 224–25
Standard Oil, 194
Suárez, Marco Fidel, 90, 135–36, 191, 226–27, 241, 269
Suárez Rendón, Gonzalo, 12
Suárez Rojas, Víctor Julio. *See* Briceño Suárez, Jorge "Mono Jojoy"
Sucre, Department of, 12, 46, *50–51*
Suez Canal, 224
Sumapaz, 272
Superintendencies of Commerce and Finance, 67
Superior Provincial Junta (Antioquia), 22
Superior Provincial Junta (Neiva), 22

Supreme Central Junta (Spain), 15–18
Supreme Court of Justice of Colombia, 56, 103
Sur, 197
Sydney, 208
Syria, 41

Tadeo Lozano, Jorge, 24
Tairona people, 12
Tales from the Town of Widows, 254
Teatro Colón, 1, 259
Teatro de La Candelaria, 197
TEC (Experimental Theater of Cali), 197
Tehuantepec, 224
tejo, 207
TELECOM, 142, 182
telenovelas, 118, 203, 216–17
Texas, 209, 216
"There is a future if there is truth," 261
El Tiempo, 184, 245
Tierra, 194
Tierradentro, 12
Tirado Mejía, Álvaro, 99
Tobar, Blasina, 191
Tocaima, 13
Tokyo, 208–9
Tolima, Department of, *46*, *50–51*, 115, 119, 134
Toro, Murillo, 180
Torres del Parque, 199
Torres del Río, César, 4
Torres Restrepo, Camilo, 102, 216, 230–31
Tour de France, 208, 277
TPB (Popular Theater of Bogotá), 197
Traba, Marta, 189
TransMiCable, 214
TransMilenio bus system, xv, 213
Tres Caínes, 119
Trozos en el sentimento popular, 200
Trump, Donald, 228, 241, 256, 266
Tumaco, 143, *177*, 251
Tunja, 13–14, 17, *19*, 22, 25, *45*, *51*, 55, 172–73, *177*, 179, 181, 208; 1811 Constitution of, 25, 55
Tupác Amaru Rebellion (1780–81), 131
Turbay, Gabriel, 98
Turbay, Julio César, 103
Turner, Frederick Jackson, 244
tutela, 59, 69n6
Twain, Mark, 192
Twentieth Century Fox, 194

Ugly Betty. *See Yo soy Betty la fea*
Umaña Luna, Eduardo, 101
Unión Patriótica (UP), 62, 104, 120
United Fruit Company (UFCO), 136–37, 226–27, 229
United Kingdom. *See* Great Britain
United Nations, 34, 52n2, 90, 141, 205, 231, 241; UNESCO, 205, 271
United States of America, xiii, 2, 5, 23–24, 38, 48, 55, 90, 93–95, 101, 103–4, 107, 109, 115, 117, 119–21, 131–33, 135–39, 141–42, 174, 180–81, 188, 191, 194, 197, 200, 207, 209–10, 217–18, 221–30, 232–39, 241, 243–53, 256, 276; Civil War, 93, 131, 223, 253; Immigration and Nationality Act of the 1965, 245; Monroe Doctrine of the, 221–22; Refugee Act of 1980, 248
United States of Colombia (1863–1886), 64, 71
Universidad de Bogotá Jorge Tadeo Lozano, 254
Universidad del Norte, 219
Universidad Externado, 269
Universidad Industrial de Santander (Bucaramanga), 219
University of Antioquia, 219
University of Florida, 101
University of the Andes, 142, 219
Urabá, Gulf of, 172
Urabá-Medellín and Central Airways (UMCA), 179

Urdaneta, Alberto, 183
Urdaneta, Rafael, 31, 53
Uribe Holguín, Guillermo, 199–200
Uribe Vélez, Álvaro, 107–8, 121–23, 142, 194, 236, 238–39, 241, 247–49, 260
Urrutia, María Isabel, 208
Urrutia-Thomson Treaty, 135, 226–27
Ursúa, Pedro de, 12
Uruguay, 127, 185, 232, 266, 276

Valencia, Guillermo, 191
Valencia Goelkel, Hernando, 196
Valenzuela, Eloy, 22
Valle del Cauca, Department of, 38–39, *50–51*, 115, 176, 192, 251, 262
Valledupar, 12, *51*
Vallejo, Fernando, 193–95
vallenato, 186, 200
Vanguardia Liberal, 184
Vargas, Getúlio, 99, 110n6, 276
Vásquez, Juan Gabriel, 195
Vatican. *See* Holy See
Vaupés, Department of, *50–51*
Vaux, Calvert, 198
Vélez, 13, 56
Venezuela, 12, 15–16, 26, 37, 89, 108, 122, 127, 137, 172, 200, 209, 216, 221, 228, 235–36, 239, 241, 245, 248–51, 265–67; captaincy general of, 13, 16, 28; in Gran Colombia, 27–31, 42, 53–54, 71, 110n2
Veraguas, 13–14, *19*
Vergara, Sofía, 255
Vergara y Vergara, José María, 83
Vespucci, Américo, 10
Víboras sociales (*Social Snakes*), 196
Vichada, Department of, *50–51*
Villa-Lobos, Heitor, 185, 199
Villamaría, 178
Villamizar, *177*
Villavicencio, *51*, 209, 240
Villavieja, 176, *177*
Villegas, Camilo, 207
La virgen de los sicarios. *See Our Lady of the Assassins*
Virgilio Barco public library, 199, 213
La Virginia, 175, *177*
Vives, Carlos, 200, 273
The Voice of Chapinero, 181
The Voice of Colombia, 181
The Voice of Tunja, 181
El Voto Nacional (Church of the National Devotion), 80
La Vorágine (*The Vortex*), 191, 193
La Voz de la Victor, 181
Vuelta de España, 208

Wade, Peter, 200
War of a Thousand Days (1899–1902), 5, 60, 67, 94, 128, 133, 225
War of the Supremes (1839–1842), 91
Washington, George, 60
Watermelon Riot (1856), 223
Wayúu people, 141
World Bank, 215, 218
World Cup, 207
World Economic Forum, 267
World War I. *See* First World War
World War II. *See* Second World War

Yatra, Sebastián, 273, 277
Yonency Cuevas, Jesús, 209
Yopal, *51*
Yo soy Betty la fea, 217

Zapata Olivella, Manuel, 193–94
Zarzal, *177*
Zipaquirá, 90, 130, 171, *177*
zona de despeje (demilitarized zone), 106–7, 121
Zulia, Department of (Gran Colombia), *29*
Zulia River, 175

About the Authors

Michael J. LaRosa is associate professor of history at Rhodes College, Memphis.

Germán R. Mejía was professor of history and dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, until his retirement in 2022.